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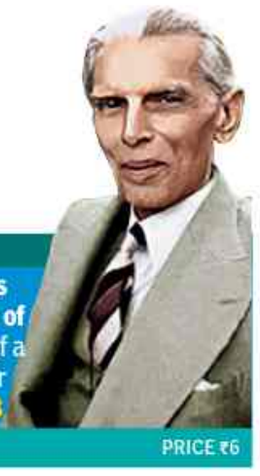

Defence minister Rajnath Singh says continuing conflict in West Asia could lead to an energy and fertiliser crisis in future and warns that no country, including India, can remain untouched if situation worsens, P 12

A US federal jury in California has found Elon Musk liable for misleading Twitter (now called X) shareholders in 2022 using false statements that depressed co's share price, P 17

OpenAI chief executive officer Sam Altman wins dismissal of a lawsuit by his sister claiming that he sexually abused her for almost a decade, P 17

University of Jammu vice-chancellor constitutes a high-level committee to examine the syllabus of political science PG course after the inclusion of a chapter on political thought of Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah sparks a controversy, P 8

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In call with Iran prez, Modi slams infra attacks, says ship lanes must stay open

Pezeshkian Urges India To Use Brics Role To End Hostilities

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: With the conflict in the West Asia region threatening to engulf energy infrastructure, and amid concerns about a possible LPG crisis at home, PM Narendra Modi spoke to the Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, for the second time since the start of military hostilities and reiterated the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure.

FULL COVERAGE: P 12, 17
▶**Natanz N-facility hit in airstrike; Israel warns of surge in attacks, P 17**

In a post on X, Modi said he also condemned attacks on critical infrastructure "in the region", which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains. While Modi has explicitly condemned violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of GCC countries, which are important for India's energy and diaspora interests, he has not condemned the US-Israel attacks on Iran. However, in his last conversation with Pezeshkian, Modi told him that India was Iran's friend.

Pezeshkian also again urged India, as the current Brics chair, to leverage its "independent role" to halt the US-Israel hostilities against Iran. He further underscored that a prerequisite for ending the war is the immediate cessation of aggression by US and Israel, along with guarantees against their recurrence in the future, according to an Iranian readout of the talks.

Separately, foreign minister S Jaishankar spoke to his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi and discussed the conflict in West Asia and its implications for the larger region.

The conflict saw a dramatic escalation this week with Israel attacking Iran's South Pars gas field and Tehran retaliating with strikes on Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City, a global LNG hub. Modi had spoken to the Qatar Amir, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and leaders of other GCC countries and condemned the attacks on energy infrastructure in the region. On the attacks on energy installations, the PM has restricted himself to denouncing attacks "in the region" and not named any country.

After the attack on its gas field, Iran had targeted energy hubs in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE, apart from Qatar. On Saturday, the PM also extended Eid and Nowruz greetings to Pezeshkian. "We expressed hope that this festive season brings peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia," he said, while also thanking Iran for ensuring the safety and security of Indian nationals.

TRUMP MULLS 'WINDING DOWN'

A displaced Beirut man stands outside a makeshift shelter with his wife and son in it

- **'We are getting very close to meeting our objectives** as we consider winding down our great Military efforts in the Middle East with respect to the Terrorist Regime of Iran,' **Trump says,** but insists that other countries should take the lead in policing Strait of Hormuz
- US military says it had **taken out an Iranian bunker housing weapons** threatening oil and gas shipments in the Strait
- Union aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu says **war will affect ATF prices,** but efforts are being made to ensure that fare hikes do not burden flyers
- **Coal production crosses 1bn-tonne mark** for 2nd year in a row, govt says adequate stocks maintained at power plants for rising energy demands
- Israel says it **struck a facility in a Tehran univ** that was allegedly being used to develop N-arms components
- Vladimir Putin says Moscow remains a **loyal friend and reliable partner** to Tehran

Iran's failed Diego strike near India reveals reach

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Cross-firing across the Gulf reached India's backyard when Iran fired two ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia, a strategically important joint US-UK military base in the Indian Ocean.

The ballistic missiles, aimed at the military facility roughly 4,000 km away from Iran, however, did not hit the base: one reportedly failed mid-flight while the other was engaged by a US naval interceptor, though it remains unclear whether it was successfully destroyed, said agencies quoting UK officials. The Pentagon declined to comment.

The strike drew global attention due to the strategic importance of the base and Iran's missile reach. Defence experts say Iran may have tested a longer range system, closer to an Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile, trying to strike farther into the Indian Ocean. The attack will also create uncertainty over Iran's actual strike capability.

▶**Base key to US ops, P 17**

Punjab CM asks minister named by official in his suicide video to resign

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Chandigarh: Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann on Saturday asked transport and jails minister **Laljit Singh Bhullar** to hand in his resignation after Punjab State Warehousing Corporation district manager Gagandeep Singh Randhawa died by suicide in Amritsar, leaving behind a video purportedly blaming the minister.

Bhullar resigned but denied the allegations, calling them "completely baseless and false". Opposition parties demanded Bhullar's arrest and a CBI probe.

A 12-second video shows Randhawa purportedly saying in Punjabi: "Your friend has consumed poison due to fear of minister Laljit Bhullar. I won't survive."

A political storm erupted. The opposition alleged that Bhullar harassed and intimidated the officer and tried to force him to award warehousing tenders to Bhullar's father.

They said Randhawa was assaulted at the minister's residence and pressured into recording a separate video admitting to a Rs 10 lakh bribe to award the tender to another party — claims that are yet to be officially confirmed.

With assembly elections less than a year away, the AAP govt moved swiftly to control damage.

▶**'Not to be tolerated', P 11**

K'taka officer ends life, blames senior

A 60-year-old assistant director with the social welfare department, due for retirement in the last week of March, was found hanging in his office at Pavagada, Tumakuru district, Friday evening. In a selfie video, he has blamed his joint director for harassing him. P 5

B'desh PM hopes for stronger ties in letter to Modi

PM Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Tarique Rahman exchanged Eid wishes, with the latter expressing hope in a letter that the occasion would further boost longstanding bonds of friendship and people-to-people ties between the two nations. "I join Your Excellency in wishing that this blessed occasion will bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to our peoples..." he said in his second letter to Modi after assuming office. P13

Menstrual leave adoption low in K'taka govt offices

Only 14% of 61,049 women govt employees in Karnataka have taken menstrual leave so far, reflecting limited coverage of the digital attendance system. The data covers select departments using the Kaams app, **reports Pearl DSouza.** The policy has also drawn opposition from sections of the private sector. P5

Commercial LPG quota hiked, relief for eateries

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New Delhi: In a move aimed at benefiting the food and hospitality industry, govt on Saturday announced a 20% additional quota of commercial LPG cylinders, taking the overall allocation to 50% of pre-conflict levels.

The ministry of petroleum and natural gas said the additional allocation will be prioritised for restaurants, dhabas, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing and dairy units, subsidised canteens and outlets run by state govts and local bodies, and community kitchens. It will also strengthen the distribution of 5kg portable cylinders for migrant workers. The allocation will be available from Monday.

▶**Iran snubs US easing of curbs on its crude, P 17**

▶**Restaurants shut, P 12**

Over 1,000 courses in govt colleges across K'taka have zero students

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Bengaluru: In Karnataka, more than 1,000 undergraduate and postgraduate courses in govt colleges reported zero enrolment in the 2025-26 academic year, highlighting a growing trend among students skipping certain programmes.

"The process of cancelling these courses for the 2026-27 academic year is being examined," said higher education minister M C Sudhakar, in response to a query in the legislative council recently.

NO TAKERS FOR HISTORY

- Zero enrolment in **1,091 UG & 170 PG courses**
- No takers for **Bachelor of Arts in Kannada, History**
- Govt is examining the process **to cancel these courses for 2026-27**
- Job aspirants showing **more interest in ITIs and GTTCs**

According to data from department of higher education, 1,091 courses with zero enrolment are undergraduate programmes, while 170 are postgraduate courses. These programmes range from UG course in criminology at first-grade college in Bagalkot to a postgraduate degree in earthquake engineering at University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering in Bengaluru.

▶**Not much to upgrade..., P 5**

Vet didn't have nod to enter hippo zone: S'mogga zoo head

Udaya Sagar | TNN

Shivamogga: The death of Shivamogga zoo veterinarian Dr **Sameeksha Reddy** has raised questions about a possible lapse in safety protocols at the facility.

Former veterinarian Dr Muruli Manohar, who is still attached with Shivamogga Zoo and Tiger and Lion Safari at Tyavarekoppa as a consultant, said he had not authorised Dr Reddy to check on a hippopotamus, while zoo director V M Amarakshar further clarified that although the 27-year-old veterinarian had permission to check on the birds, her entry into the hippopotamus enclosure at night was unauthorised.

Amarakshar added that assistance would have been provided had she asked for it.

Officials at the zoo noted that Dr Reddy's dedication was well documented, yet, as a trainee, she ought to have followed the directives of her superiors.

Dr Reddy had recently been recognised for treating an aged leopard named Bhadra. However, her passion for wildlife reportedly led her to bypass mandatory safety protocol on Thursday night.

▶**Used ladder, P 5**

CBI questions 3 ex-senior execs of Anil Ambani group

CBI has questioned three former managing directors of Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group—Satish Seth, Gautam Doshi, and Amitabh Jhunjhunwala—in alleged Rs 2,929cr fraud case involving Reliance Communications, filed on a complaint by SBI. The executives, no longer with the group, were key figures for over 15 years. Reliance group refused to comment saying the officials were not with the group any more. P10

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Divers to search reefs in Maldives for rallyist

Search for rally driver Hari Singh continued Friday with rescuers confining their efforts to a section of coral reefs near Vaavu Atoll in Maldives where the mishap occurred. Dive teams will look for them Sunday. P12

Detention order not for 'normal' case, says HC

Quashing a detention order passed against a man over a murder case involving a money dispute, Madras HC said a preventive detention order can never be a substitute to handle a situation that can be dealt with under normal criminal law. P8

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In 1 year, 186 phones vanish along Karnataka's rail route

Data Shows 53% Thefts Occur At B'luru Stations

Anush.S@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Is your mobile phone safe while travelling on a train? As per data from Railway Protection Force (RPF), rail passengers lost 186 phones from April 2025 to March 2026 in South Western Railway (SWR) zone.

Though SWR zone has three divisions — Bengaluru, Mysuru, and Hubballi — the numbers reveal that more than half the phones (53%) were stolen on station premises in Bengaluru. Despite such thefts being common, RPF said their reporting was poor in previous years as most of the devices were stolen while a passenger was travelling from one place to another.

To tackle this problem, in April last year, RPF integrated the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal with Rail Madad, and slowly started cracking down on phone thefts.

The portal, launched by the central department of telecommunications, is designed to recover mobile phones by blocking, tracking and managing lost or stolen devices. By leveraging this platform, RPF renders lost/missing phones unusable by blocking their IMEI numbers, thereby deterring illegal possession and resale of these devices.

"It is compulsory to register a complaint with the CEIR portal for it to be investigated. As soon as a complaint is received here, the sim will get blocked," a senior RPF officer said. Of these cases, 37 were filed in 2026, within 2.5 months of the year, showing a clear trend within the state.

Among the 100 phones reported missing within Bengaluru division, KSR Bengaluru takes the lion's share, followed by other stations such as SMVT Bengaluru, Yeshwantpur, and KR Pura.

"The high number of cases in Bengaluru is basically because it has terminals and most of the passengers converge here, generating high passenger traffic. In a few cases, nobody would have stolen the phone, it might just have fallen down. In such cases, it becomes difficult to trace the phone," Shreyans Chinchawade, RPF Bengaluru's senior divisional security commissioner, told **TOI**.

What's different now?

He added that it was very difficult to trace and locate mobile phones before the portal, and a recovery would be a rare scenario in the case of theft. "Now, even if the original sim has been discarded, we will get an alert when the new sim is inserted. In most cases, passengers don't know when the phone is lost, but at least on the CEIR portal, they are giving data like the IMEI number, and it gets blocked, preventing the device's use for any criminal activity," he pointed out.

As of March 2026, RPF and Government Railway Police (GRP) have managed to recover 31 mobile phones. While the recovery rate remains low, RPF personnel said that the new portal has actually improved tracking compared to previous years.

However, 10 phones out of the 31 recovered are yet to be collected by the complainants. According to officials, some phones remain unclaimed even six months after recovery as the complainants do not answer phone calls.

While more than 150 phones stolen or lost from within the state haven't been recovered, officials said a significant number of them have already been traced. Once the phone is located, RPF contacts the individual in possession of it. If it isn't voluntarily handed over, an FIR will be filed.

COMMUNITY PRAYS, FAMILY BONDS

Pics: Chethan Shivakumar, Muthu P

Ayesha Fatima from east Bengaluru celebrated Eid ul-Fitr Saturday with a grand family gathering at St Thomas Town. Marking the end of Ramzan, 11 family members, including those travelling from abroad, reunited to uphold a decades-old tradition. Dressed in festive attire, the family relished a traditional spread featuring biryani, sheer khurma, sevaiya and kebabs. Meanwhile, Muslim community members observed Eid with mass prayers at mosques across the city

Govt extends OTS scheme for BWSSB bill defaulters

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Amid rising demand for Cauvery water during the peak summer months, the govt Saturday announced a major relief for lakhs of Bengalureans who have defaulted on water bills owed to Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

Rolling out a one-time settlement (OTS) scheme, deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar said the govt will waive interest on pending dues if consumers cleared the principal amount within the stipulated period.

"The OTS scheme will be valid for three months from April to June 2026. Of the 11 lakh water connections in Bengaluru, about 5.1 lakh have outstanding dues for various reasons. As of Feb 2026, arrears stand at Rs 851.3 crore, including Rs 539.4 crore in principal and Rs 311.9 crore in interest," he said.

A senior BWSSB official said the scheme will apply to all categories — domestic, commercial, and industrial consumers — while dues from govt departments will be addressed through reconciliation. The water authority will notify defaulters with details of payable amounts. Payments can be made through kiosks, the online portal, and digital modes.

Urging citizens to utilise the three-month window to clear dues and avoid further penalties, Shivakumar said the initiative seeks to provide financial relief to consumers while strengthening the board's finances.

ALMANAC (22.3.2026)

Meena Masa 8 – Shri Parabhava Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Vasantha Ritu – Tithi: Chaitra Sukla Chaturthi h. 21-17 Nakshatra: Bharani h. 22-43 Yoga: Vaidhriti h. 15-42. 2 Shawwal | Kali Day 1872656

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Which stories should your focus be on?
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Child walking with mother mowed down

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A three-and-a-half-year-old girl walking with her mother was crushed to death under the wheels of a rashly driven truck near Nelamanagala Saturday morning.

The victim is Nishtia LN, elder daughter of Lakshminarayana and Lavanya. Lavanya, who was carrying her 11-month-old boy in her arms, watched helplessly as the truck ran over her daughter around 11.30am. Police said Lavanya, a homemaker, was visiting a temple. "They were walking along the left lane of the congested road when the truck, driven by Murthy, knocked down Nishita. Murthy fled the scene, leaving behind the vehicle," a police officer said.

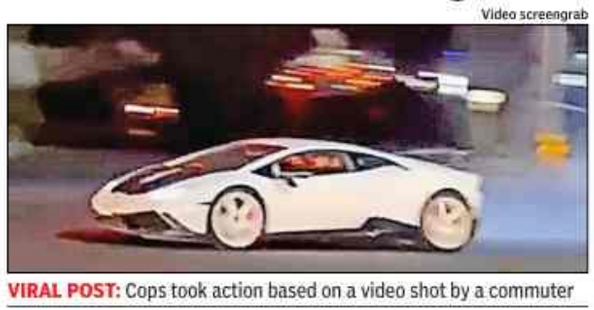
2 motorists killed

In another accident, two factory workers astride a motorbike died after colliding with a Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation bus on Pattanayakanahalli Main Road, Sira, Tumakuru district, on Saturday. The victims have been identified as T Narasimhamurthy, 25, and Naveen S, 27.

The KSRTC bus driver, identified as Manjunath, fled the scene, leaving behind the vehicle, police said.

Lamborghini driver booked for drifting stunt

Video screengrab



VIRAL POST: Cops took action based on a video shot by a commuter

Bengaluru: Acting suo motu on a social media video, traffic police have booked the driver of a white Lamborghini for dangerously performing a drifting stunt near Anil Kumble Circle on the newly asphalted MG Road between 2am and 3am Saturday.

The viral video, recorded by a commuter and tagging city police, shows the sports car zooming towards MG Road direction from Chinnaswamy Stadium, applying sudden brakes on reaching the middle of the traffic junction, performing the drift stunt before speeding away back in the stadium's direction. The driver has been booked under BNS Section 281 (rash or negligent driving/riding on a public way that endangers human life or safety). According to the FIR, the licence plate of the luxury sports car was KA 05-NR-0009. DCP (in-charge), west traffic division, Sahil Bagla, said: "We will not tolerate such behaviour on city roads. We will trace the owner and the person who performed the dangerous stunt and initiate strict legal action against them." TNN

Investors asked to contact CID for investigation

Bengaluru: CID sleuths probing alleged irregularities by Catena Homes India Pvt Ltd have requested investors to approach its economic offences division in Bengaluru and submit documents that could help in carrying out investigation. "We are probing some complaints made against fixed deposits accepted by Catena Homes on lease/rent," a CID release stated. People can contact superintendent of police, CID-Carlton House-Palace Road, 560001. Call 9108159340. TNN

IL passengers, ₹5.7cr revenue: Divya Darshan drives devotion

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File photo

SMOOTH RIDE The weekend schedule and AC comfort are major draws, and officials said plans are under way to expand 1-day packages to cover more destinations in and around Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Every weekend, Bengaluru transforms into a hub for spiritual exploration as thousands of devotees seek convenient ways to visit the city's temples.

To meet this demand, Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) launched the one-day Divya Darshan tour in March 2024, offering families a hassle-free and well-organised way to cover multiple temples and spiritual centres in a single day. With air-conditioned buses, scheduled departures on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, and carefully planned routes across the city, the service blends devotion with comfort while encouraging more people to explore Bengaluru's spiritual landscape.

The tour begins at Kempegowda bus station at 8.30am and concludes by 6pm. It covers several prominent temples and spiritual centres, including Sri Gali Anjaneya Swamy Temple, Sri Rajarajeshwari Temple, Shrungagiri Sri Shanmukha Swamy Temple, Sri Devi Karumariamma Temple, Omkar Hills Temple, Iskcon Vaikunta Hill Temple, the Art of Living Foundation, and Banashankari temple. Ticket fares are Rs 450 for adults and Rs 350 for children.

Since its launch on March 8, 2024, Divya Darshan services operated by BMTC central zone have ferried 1.1 lakh passengers across 3,165 trips, covering 454km and generating Rs 5.7 crore in revenue.

> The response has been very good. This is an innovative step in public transport, and because of the overwhelming interest, the corporation is planning to extend services to nearby temples around Bengaluru, like those in Chikkaballapur, to give people more options
>
> — BMTC spokesperson

Among all routes, DD4 saw the highest ridership after the first service, with over 14,000 passengers using it. The service covers about 175km and has operated 551 trips so far, covering prominent temples such as Gali Anjaneya, Iskcon, and Banashankari temple.

Commuters say it is a great way to spend the weekend and suitable for all weekends. Vasanthi Sadashiv, 70, a resident of Sahakar Nagar near Kodigehalli, said, "I find these tours very convenient and truly enjoy visiting the temples, as the arrangements and infrastructure are excellent. It's a wonderful opportunity to explore spiritual sites without worrying about travel hassles. The timing and schedule make it ideal for weekend trips, and it's a perfect way to spend quality time with my sister."

Transport minister Ramalinga Reddy, who also holds the Hindu religious institutions and charitable endowments portfolio, said: "The service has helped thousands of families spend time together while visiting multiple temples within the city and on the outskirts. We have also covered temples of historical significance, and the initiative has been well-received by the public."

When ₹30 fee makes Q-comm users spend ₹200

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Bengaluru: For Bengaluru's quick commerce users, the rule is simple — either order for at least Rs 199 or be ready to pay extra. As platforms roll back fee waivers, consumers are now spending more than they originally intended just to avoid delivery charges, effectively turning "free delivery" into a Rs 200 minimum commitment.

FREE ISN'T FREE

What was once a spontaneous Rs 50 or Rs 80 order now often gets padded with additional items to cross the free delivery threshold. "I just wanted milk and bread worth Rs 90, but ended up adding snacks to push it to Rs 200," said Rohan S, a 22-year-old engineering student in HSR Layout. "Otherwise, with delivery and handling, it becomes too expensive."

Platforms like Zepto, Swiggy Instamart and Blinkit have all converged around a Rs 199 free-delivery threshold, while also reintroducing fees for smaller orders. In fact, Zepto joined the bandwagon recently by increasing the free delivery threshold from the earlier Rs 149 to Rs 199. In Nov last year, free delivery was for shopping up to Rs 99. Swiggy's Instamart, Blinkit, and Amazon Now charge Rs 30 as delivery fee for orders below the threshold. The result: customers are either paying Rs 20-30 extra per order or consciously spending more than needed.

For students and young professionals in Bengaluru — key drivers of the quick commerce boom — the shift is already changing behaviour. "We used to order multiple times a day without thinking. Now we plan orders as a group or just wait till we actually need more things," said Nisha M, a student at Christ University.

Others say the psychology of spending has flipped. "Earlier, I saved money because I only bought what I needed. Now I'm spending extra just to avoid the Rs 30 fee. Either way, I'm losing money," said Priyanka Rao, a marketing professional in Indiranagar.

Industry experts say this was inevitable. The aggressive fee waiver war in late 2025 failed to deliver proportional user growth, pushing companies to recalibrate pricing. With discounts shrinking, the focus has shifted back to sustainability and margins.

But for Bengaluru's convenience-first consumers, the change is stark. "The whole idea was quick, cheap and easy. Now it's like — how can we keep ordering like before if every order needs to hit Rs 200?" said Arjun K, a techie in Whitefield.

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Multi-level parking: Metro users, residents call for better planning

Sanjay.Murty@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Facing mounting pressure due to inadequate parking and limited land availability, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is set to introduce multi-level parking facilities at nine existing Metro stations across the city.

Senior BMRCL officials said the move is aimed at significantly increasing parking capacity at key stations where demand has outstripped supply by looking at vertical solutions instead of expanding horizontally. "Acquiring land for parking near new stations has become increasingly challenging. We are, therefore, focusing on optimising existing spaces by building multi-level parking structures," a senior official said.

Currently, of the 83 Metro stations across three operational lines, 69 stations are equipped with around 80 parking lots. However, many of these are operating beyond capacity, forcing commuters to park vehicles on surrounding roads.

In fact, residents near Rajajinagar Metro station recently urged Bengaluru West City Corporation officials to resolve the issue of irresponsible parking near the station.

Syed Asif

WHERE IS SPACE? Finding a parking slot near Namma Metro stations is almost next to impossible, say commuters

> Acquiring land for parking near new stations has become increasingly challenging. We are, therefore, focusing on optimising existing spaces by building multi-level parking structures — **Senior BMRCL official**

Around the West of Chord Road area, roads between the Metro station and Balavana Children's Park (Line Park) are choked with two-wheelers parked on either side of the road. Cars and some heavy vehicles can also be seen parked around the park's compound. The authorities' attempts to control the menace by erecting 'No Parking' signboards, with warnings of a Rs 1,000 fine upon violation, clearly failed to deter motorists from parking.

Nawin Iyer, a resident of Rajajinagar, said irresponsible parking made it difficult for residents to access their own homes.

"There were instances where ambulances were unable to reach houses facing medical emergencies. Sometimes, even in the case of a death, families struggle to get hearse vans in front of their homes," he said. Iyer added that residents can manage to move one or two vehicles, but are helpless if there are rows of vehicles parked.

"Many relatives who visit our homes have to park their vehicles hundreds of metres away and walk to our house. Sometimes, we are unable to park our own vehicles or take them out as vehicles are blocking our driveway," he said.

Usha Sreekanthan, 82, makes it a point to use the Metro as much as she can, especially to visit friends and relatives in other parts of the city. The resident of Banashankari III Stage mostly takes the Metro from Mysore Road station.

She emphasised that a large number of Metro commuters are office-goers who won't find time to wait for buses, and hence, take their vehicle to the station. "When stations are planned, the authorities must think who are the commuters using the service – in this case, it is the office-going crowd," she said.

Recollecting her recent visits to the US, she said the Subway stations in New York, New Jersey, Atlanta and other cities have ample parking space, enabling even CEOs to use mass public transportation.

Bengaluru Metro Commuters' Association member Rajesh Bhat said BMRCL officials must have foresight and prioritise parking spaces when planning stations so that more commuters are encouraged to use the Metro. "Regular commuters can be given a pass that includes both the Metro fare and parking charges," he suggested.

Helper rejoins, vanishes with ₹79L worth gold from shop

Chaithanya.Swamy @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: An employee of a jewellery shop on Avenue Road stole gold ornaments worth around Rs 79 lakh when the jeweller briefly stepped out of the store.

According to the complaint filed by Vishal Jain, 36, owner of Sankit Gold in CT Street Cross on Avenue Road, the accused, Jashwant Singh alias Babu, a native of Rajasthan, joined the store as a helper in Nov 2025 for a salary of Rs 12,000 per month. On Dec 10, he quit his job, citing inadequate salary. A few days later, Jashwant called Vishal, saying he was willing to rejoin his shop for a salary of Rs 15,000 per month. Vishal agreed and Jashwant rejoined work on Feb 13 this year.

On March 18, between 5.40pm and 5.55pm, Vishal stepped out briefly to relieve himself after locking the door of his shop. When he returned at 5.55pm, he found the shop door open and Jashwant missing.

On checking, he found 18 long and 15 short gold necklaces, weighing 616 grams in total, along with Rs 1 lakh in cash missing.

The total value of the 18-carat stolen gold is estimated at Rs 78.8 lakh.

Attempts to contact the accused failed as his mobile phone was switched off.

A case was registered under BNS Section 306 (theft) at City Market police station.

Man steals gold from priests' families on puja pretext; held

Bengaluru: A 50-year-old man was arrested on charges of fleeing with gold ornaments, mostly belonging to the wives of priests or other women in their families, on the pretext of needing these for rituals.

Seven cases were filed earlier against the accused, **Praveen Bhat**, who belongs to Bhadravati in Shivamogga district and is a resident of Hosur Road in Bengaluru. The latest case was registered by Rajajinagar police.

Investigation revealed Bhat would befriend priests by regularly visiting temples and win their trust with handsome contributions. "In the latest case, he told a priest from Prakashnagar recently that he was opening a new shop and wished to take the priest's wife to the store since she is Muttaide (a married woman whose husband is alive) as a token of good luck.

Since Bhat had visited the priest many times, the latter trusted him and sent his wife. Bhat took her in an auto and, while travelling near KR Market, he asked her to remove her gold chain and finger ring for safety. Pocketing them, he fled," DCP, north division, BS Nemagoud, said. The stolen articles were assessed to be worth Rs 4.5 lakh. Later, a complaint was filed against Bhat and cops traced him to his Hosur Road residence. Police recovered 115 grams of gold ornaments, which he had pledged in jewellery shops. TNN

No need to entertain routine transfer pleas, HC tells CMO

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The high court observed that requests for transfers and postings should not be directly entertained by the chief minister's office, stressing that such routine service matters must be handled at the departmental level.

A division bench of Justices DK Singh and TM Nadaf made the observation while disposing of a writ appeal filed by S Chethan, assistant engineer (electrical) with Bescom.

Chethan, who was posted in Whitefield division, had filed multiple petitions between 2022 and 2024 challenging his transfer and also to consider his request for a mutual transfer with another engineer, supported by a recommendation from the chief minister's office (CMO). A single bench had dismissed his petitions in Sept 2024, directing him to report to Bescom's east division-12.

The high court noted that it has come across several instances where letters or approvals issued from CMO appeared to influence transfers of Group B and C employees, sometimes overriding the decisions of competent authorities in the cases.

In the appeal proceedings, the chief secretary clarified through an affidavit that communications from CMO are merely recommendatory and do not constitute transfer orders or approvals. Final decisions, he said, rest with the departments concerned, which must assess such requests in accordance with Cadre and Recruitment Rules and general transfer guidelines issued by department of personnel and administrative reforms (DPAR).

Taking note of the clarification, the division bench reiterated that transfers and postings should remain within the domain of administrative departments, adding that the highest executive authority of the state (CMO) should not devote time or interfere in such routine service matters.

BDA's land acquisition for BSK project upheld

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: In a relief for Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), the high court has upheld the acquisition of certain pieces of land at Gubbalala village for the formation of further extension of Banashankari VI Stage by linking the existing VI Stage Layout.

@GUBBALALA

The preliminary notification for the scheme was issued on Nov 7, 2002, for 1,532 acres and 17 guntas of land in eight villages. However, in the final notification issued on Sept 9, 2003, only 750 acres, including 142 acres and one gunta of land at Gubbalala village, were notified. Thereafter, the acquisition was restricted to 395 acres and 37 guntas of land, including 39 acres and 10 guntas of Gubbalala village.

The petitioners-landowners challenged the notifications and on Jan 27, 2025, a single bench quashed the acquisition of around three and a half acres belonging to the petitioners on the ground that BDA had not taken possession of those lands.

A division bench comprising Justices DK Singh and TM Nadaf said the scheme has been substantially implemented, as 53 sites have been allotted to the allottees.

"We are of the considered view that .. there is no question of applicability of either the provisions of Section 27 of the BDA Act or Section 24(2) of the Right to Fair Compensation Act," it said.

Polisher, aide steal 12kg silver from shop, held

Bengaluru: Two youths were arrested on charges of stealing over 12kg of silver ornaments in Jan.

Narendra alias Naresh Kumar, 21, and Kuldeep, 25, are from Rajasthan, police said. They stole silver ornaments from Dhanalaxmi Rhodium LLP, a silver polishing unit in Bettappa Lane on CT Street, owned by Kishan Bishnoi.

Bishnoi told police Naresh joined the shop as a polisher about a month prior to the theft and was staying on the premises. On Jan 21, he allegedly stole the ornaments with Kuldeep and escaped.

Police traced the two to Rajasthan. TNN

AI should help judges, not replace them: CJI

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the judicial system must strengthen, not supplant, human decision-making, Chief Justice of India **Justice Surya Kant** said Saturday.

He was addressing a seminar on 'Artificial intelligence – Prevention and resolution of disputes', organised by Karnataka Judicial Academy in collaboration with Bar Association of India, UIA India Chapter and National Law School of India University (NLSIU).

AI should remain a tool to assist judges rather than replace them, he said. It can help manage vast volumes of data, identify patterns and reduce procedural delays, the CJI noted, but cautioned against its role in the adjudicatory process. "If AI tools are allowed to gain control over judgment phase, it could lead to a non-transparent and unaccountable system," he pointed out.

The CJI stressed that the final stage of delivering judgments must rest with human judges, guided by logic, experience and reason. "AI can show pathways, but the direction must be determined by human intellect," he added.

Karnataka HC Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru raised concerns over whether AI is complementing or replacing human decision-making, and questioned its impact on accessibility and transparency in the justice system. At the same time, he acknowledged AI's potential in predicting disputes through pattern analysis.

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OBITUARY

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Upright and just till the end of his days.
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A lasting memory and leaving a path to follow.

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Brothers and Sisters-in-law
Relatives | Friends | Employees
& Staff of ICP (India) Pvt. Ltd.
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VAIKUNTA SAMARADHANA

VAIKUNTA SAMARADANE

Sri Thyagaraj .A
DOD: 13-03-2026

Date: 23/03/2026
Place: Natakashiromani A.V. Varadachar Memorial Association,
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Mourning
Children & Family Members
Lunch: 1.30 pm
Ph: 9945406253

OBITUARY

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY

SMT. MANJULA W PAUL
Age - 88
Funeral on
22-13-2026 at 4 PM.
Indian Christian Cemetery
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Gate No.2
Duly Attested by
Family Members

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Mr J Chittaranjan Dass

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Realty to e-comm: 46k migrant workers registered in K'taka

Bengal Tops In Construction Sector: Dept

Suchith.Kidiyoor
@timesofindia.com

Pic for representation

Over 10,000 gig workers registered to avail social security benefits. Of these, 1,316 workers are from other states. Among migrant gig workers, Assam accounts for the highest number, with 296 workers, followed by Odisha with 275. West Bengal ranks third, with 136 registered as gig workers in Karnataka. These migrant workers are employed as bike-taxi riders or as food-delivery executives

Bengaluru: Karnataka continues to draw migrant workers from across India, reflecting its strong economic growth and expanding infrastructure sector.

According to the state labour department, 46,393 migrant workers from more than 30 states and union territories are registered with various welfare boards.

Workers from West Bengal form the largest group (10,730) in the construction sector, followed by Bihar (9,489) and Jharkhand (6,021). Uttar Pradesh (3,845) and Odisha (3,508) are the two other states in the top five.

At the other end of the spectrum, only one worker each has been registered from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Lakshadweep, while five workers are from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A significant number of these workers are employed in Bengaluru's construction industry, contributing to major infrastructure and real estate projects such as Metro expansion, road development, and large residential and commercial complexes.

In addition, 10,475 gig workers registered to avail social security benefits. Of these, 1,316 workers are from other states. Among migrant gig workers, Assam accounts for the highest number, with 296 workers, followed by Odisha with 275. West Bengal ranks third, with 136 workers registered as gig workers in the state. These migrant workers are employed as bike-taxi riders or as food delivery executives.

"While these numbers pertain only to those registered with the department, the actual numbers are much higher. Most of the workers from outside are concentrated in Bengaluru," a labour department official said.

The department stated that no comprehensive survey was conducted so far to assess migrant workers employed across various sectors in the state, and therefore the exact number of migrant workers remains unavailable. However, under the provisions of labour laws, including the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, employers are required to obtain prior permission from the assistant commissioner of the labour department before engaging any inter-state migrant workers.

A total of 40,945 migrant workers registered with Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board. The board provides a range of social security benefits to registered workers. These include a monthly pension of Rs 3,000 for members aged above 60 and a family pension of Rs 1,500 for the dependants of deceased members.

Registered workers are also eligible for skill training and tool assistance, maternity benefits of Rs 50,000 for the first two children, and Rs 4,000 towards funeral expenses. In addition, the board offers scholarships for workers' children ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 60,000, depending on the course of study. Members are also covered under insurance schemes and preventive healthcare programmes provided through the welfare board.

Replying to concerns raised by MLC Govinda Raju about locals losing job opportunities to migrant workers, Labour minister Santosh Lad said the state govt did not receive such complaints.

The govt also stated that contractors employing more than five migrant workers are required to register them with the labour department; otherwise, registration is not mandatory. This, however, indicates that a large number of migrant workers employed across various sectors may remain outside the registration framework, suggesting that the actual number of migrant workers in the state could be significantly higher than the official figures.

Social welfare dept official dies by suicide, blames senior

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A 60-year-old assistant director with the social welfare department, due for retirement in last week of March, was found hanging in his office at Pavagada, Tumakuru district, Friday evening.

Mallikarjun, a resident of Pavagada, sent a video on WhatsApp to his friends saying he will commit suicide. Police said his wife and children reside in Tumakuru, while Mallikarjun lives with his mother in Pavagada. In the video, Mallikarjun blamed his joint director, Krishnappa, for harassing him and pushing him to take the extreme step. "My family has looked after me well. I should have helped them, but Krishnappa's harassment has forced me to take this step. Law will take care of him, and my family members need not take revenge," Mallikarjun is heard saying in the video.

Based on the complaint made by Mallikarjun's wife, Pavagada Town police registered an abetment case against Krishnappa.

14% of women staff claimed menstrual leave so far: Data

Pearl.DSouza
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AI

As the state works to compile comprehensive data, women and child welfare minister Laxmi Hebbalkar said multiple departments have already begun implementing the policy

Bengaluru: Only 13.6% of 61,049 women govt employees have availed themselves of menstrual leave so far this year, as per e-governance department data, with officials noting that the figures reflect the limited coverage of the digital system.

The data pertains to employees in health & family welfare and education departments, which have onboarded Karnataka Advanced Attendance Management System (KAAMS) or Kartavya app to record attendance. As the state works to compile comprehensive data, women and child welfare minister Laxmi Hebbalkar said, "Multiple departments have already begun implementing the policy."

Karnataka State Government Women Employees' Association president Roshni Gowda said, "At that time, departments would ask for a copy of the order. However, that issue has now been resolved," she said, referring to early glitches before the department of personnel and administrative reforms (DAPR) issued the order. Association members reported no resistance from colleagues. "The 12 days are added to our regular leave, and we apply for it through the system," said Baby, a union member.

Officials said the current numbers are not fully representative, as KAAMS covers only about 25% of the state's 5.5 lakh govt workforce.

Bhoobalan T, CEO of the Centre for e-Governance, said the provision was enabled on the attendance system soon after the govt order in Jan. "Health and education departments have driven the rollout strongly, with high levels of staff registration, while other departments are gradually adopting it," he said.

To address privacy concerns and streamline applications, the state is integrating menstrual leave into the e-office leave management system. "We are redeveloping the e-office platform, and the menstrual leave feature will be incorporated into the existing system soon," he said, adding that the move will improve record-keeping, as some leave instances currently go unaccounted for.

Bangalore Hotels' Association has challenged it in court. "Women achieved equality over the years, and introducing such provisions may act as a setback. It could also impact operations, especially during peak business periods," said Veerendra Kamat, honorary secretary of the association, noting that women make up 10–15% of the workforce in the sector.

Labour department secretary Salma Fahim said high court has directed not to take any coercive action against employers until further orders.

Vet asked driver for ladder to descend into hippo enclosure

▶ Continued from page 1

During her rounds, Dr Sameeksha Reddy is believed to have tried to enter the hippopotamus enclosure to check on an animal that had been off its feed for four days and was thought to be pregnant.

She asked her driver to arrange a ladder to descend into the enclosure and examine the hippo using a thermal imaging camera.

However, the animal reportedly got agitated and shook the ladder, causing Dr Reddy to fall into a pond in the hippo enclosure, where she was attacked by the animal. Her driver managed to pull her out, but not before she had suffered grievous injuries.

The incident has triggered outrage among wildlife activists, who have questioned the zoo management, citing lack of night-patrol vehicles and absence of senior supervision.

TOI

Dr Sameeksha Reddy had recently been recognised for treating an aged leopard named Bhadra

The hippopotamus shook the ladder, causing Dr Reddy to fall into a pond in its enclosure, where she was attacked

Sandalwood thief falls into well, held

Times News Network

A thief was caught after he fell into an open well while stealing a sandalwood tree in a farm at Ainapur village in Chincholi taluk of Kalaburagi district Friday night.

The accused is Baburao Laxman Rathod. Baburao and his accomplice Premsingh tried stealing the sandalwood tree. A farmer, Toufiq Manjalesab, hearing the sound of tree-chopping, alerted others. The two tried to escape but Baburao fell into the well. Premsingh managed to flee.

The villagers rescued Baburao and took him to Chincholi police station. Police sent the accused to judicial custody. Efforts are on to nab Premsingh.

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Internal tussle delays Cong decision on bypoll tickets

Times News Network

Bengaluru: The governing Congress remained locked in last-minute negotiations over candidate selection for Davanagere South and Bagalkot assembly seats Saturday, with internal divisions delaying a decision. With BJP announcing its candidates Thursday and Monday being the last date to file nominations for the April 9 by-elections, Congress is under pressure to finalise its names.

AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said candidates will be announced by Sunday morning. He also said the KPCC president and the CM will send their recommendations, after which AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Lok Sabha opposition leader Rahul Gandhi will take a final call.

Surjewala said extensive consultations were held to accommodate competing interests. "We have considered even the slightest dissent among party workers. If one worker has a different opinion, it must be heard. That is the Congress party," he added.

In Davanagere, the party is caught between demands from minority functionaries and the influential Shamanur family. In Bagalkot, the contest is largely within the HY Meti family. Surjewala camped in the state to resolve the deadlock. On Friday, he held separate meetings with CM Siddaramaiah and deputy CM DK Shivakumar, and also consulted election in-charges of both constituencies.

While Bagalkot discussions were said to be nearing a resolution, tensions escalated in Davanagere. Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and others pushed for a minority community candidate, holding discussions with Kharge and Surjewala. At the same time, minister SS Mallikarjun strongly backed a ticket for his son Samarth Shamanur.

SHAKTI SCHEME: OVER ₹4.5K-CRORE DUES PENDING IN LAST 2.5 YEARS

In the last 2.5 years, the state's four road transport corporations (RTCs) — KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC and KKRTC — have spent ₹17,647.5 crore on providing free bus travel for women under the Shakti scheme

File photo

INs AND OUTs
- Launched: **June 11, 2023**
- Spending by RTCs: **₹17,647.5 cr**
- Reimbursed by state govt: **₹13,073 cr**

All the four road transport corporations have spent over ₹17k-crore under the scheme

Pending Dues

Overall pending dues: ₹4,573.8

Tickets issued

Annual expenditure

*Source: State govt | All figures rounded off in crore; numbers till Feb 28, 2026

— Text by Suchith Kidiyoor

"Congress govt took steps to expand the fleet by adding 6,082 new buses, including the induction of 2,000 buses in the current financial year. During the BJP's term, no measures were taken to fill vacant posts and expand fleet. The state has provided financial aid of Rs 2,000 crore to the road corporations to clear pending dues towards gratuity, PF, fuel and other expenses. The govt also exempted the corporations from paying motor vehicle tax to the tune of ₹1,219.2 crore

Ramalinga Reddy | TRANSPORT MINISTER

"The corporations' finances have not been adversely affected. Recently, the state govt agreed to provide ₹1,271 crore to clear pending salary arrears of staff. We do not see any reason for Shakti scheme dues to impact the financial situation of the transport utilities

Akram Pasha | KSRTC MD

Educationist: Govt hasn't done much to upgrade its programmes

▶ Continued from page 1

Overall, this has left 1,161 classrooms in govt first-grade and postgraduate colleges across the state unused, with most of the vacancies concentrated in tier 2 and 3 towns.

While several combinations of Bachelor of Arts in subjects such as Kannada and history have no takers, even job-oriented courses such as computer applications and tax procedure (BCom) have no students in some degree colleges.

The three Sanskrit colleges under DCE have also seen a significant drop in admissions. For instance, Sri Chamarajendra Govt Samskrita College has more than 20 PG programmes lying vacant, while Sri Manmaharaja Samskrita College has 23 courses with no admissions.

"In the good old days, people used to study subjects like philosophy for pure passion or simply to gain knowledge. Nowadays, students enter higher education only to land jobs. This is particularly true with those in govt colleges that cater mostly to people from the lower income groups," said Ali Khwaja, founder of Banjara Academy, an education and counselling institution.

EMPTY CLASSROOMS

He further said the govt has not done much to upgrade these programmes that have no takers. "That is why ITIs and GTTCs are garnering more interest among the current lot of students and job aspirants," he added.

Dept flags need for district-wide drive

To increase enrolment in govt schools, the department of school education and literacy has appealed to district commissioners and chief executive officers of zilla panchayats to implement a district-wide enrolment campaign.

As part of the campaign, School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs), along with alumni and teachers, will need to conduct house-to-house visits and encourage parents to enrol their children in govt schools. Community engagement will also have to be strengthened through local networks and WhatsApp groups, the department said.

Female engg students to get biz training

SruthySusan.Ullas
@timesofindia.com

AI

VTU INITIATIVE

Bengaluru: Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) launched an initiative to promote entrepreneurship among pre-final-year female engineering students across its affiliated colleges. Around 4,000 students will be trained in entrepreneurial skills, and around 100 of them will be identified to finally build their start-ups.

The programme, christened She Innovates, has been launched under Visvesvaraya Research and Innovation Foundation (VRIF) of VTU. A limit of around 80 students per college has been set. Thus far, around 3,400 students registered.

These students will be trained by various corporate partners, including Wipro, JAN AI, UN Women, Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM), and TiE Chapters of Hubballi, Bengaluru, Mangaluru, and Mysuru. "They will be equipped with learning and insight into industry that would help them in their journey as an entrepreneur," said Santosh Ittanagi, head, execution and operations-VRIF.

After the three-month training, students will have to take part in a hackathon, where they will be asked to come up with real-world solutions to problems identified in a rural setting. "The motto of She Innovates is to identify 100 people who really want to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is not an easy journey. The survival rate is very low. We will be speaking to the families to ensure the selected 100 have the right kind of family atmosphere and support as well," he said.

VTU, which has around 80,000 students in a batch, has around half of them as women. "We designed this programme to recognise and honour the talent of women by giving them greater priority in the engineering field. Many companies came forward to support this initiative. We will also provide mentors to the female students. Priority will be given to students from rural areas," said Prof S Vidyashankar, vice-chancellor, VTU.

Emphasis should be on practical education: VTU

"Engineering colleges must prepare students for the job market by providing practical education," said the VC.

Speaking at a principals' meeting organised recently at a private hotel by VTU and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), he said, "It is not that there are no job opportunities. However, students suitable for the job market are not readily available. As much as possible, emphasis should be placed on practical education."

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SPACIOUS semi-furnished 3/3.5 BHK apartments for Sale or Rent at Prestige Fairfield, Raheja Pebble Bay projects No Brokers. Contact: 9739981605

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HBR LAYOUT

HBR layout 2 BHK 1101 sqft flat East & North facing BDA plot 40ft Road, 24hrs water 86L. behind Nagavara KEB office Nr Ring Rd. Call-9632296279.

HEBBAL

SALE
45*60
SITE

IN THE Finest Location of Manyata Residency Behind Hilton Hotel For Details Call Niti Estates 9900001973

HIGH End Luxury Flat For Sale 4637 Sqft 4BHK South Facing For Sale Embassy Lake Terrace Contact Rajesh Talreja 9845302727

HENNUR

BHAIRATHI HENNUR SITE FOR SALE 40X30, NORTH FACING DC CONVERTED, DEADEND PROPERTY 8200/- NEGO: 9972849555/ 9606178077

HORAMAVU

SALE 58x54 South East 1 BHK Next To Prestige Augusta Golf Villas, B'lore Central. 6500/-, PSft E Katha, Anagapura Main Road. Contact: 9008403340

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HRBR LAYOUT

HORAMAVU main Road Sale Commercial New Building Site 5000 sqft Corner Building G+ 4th F. Rental income 6 Lakhs. Price: 12.75cr. Call: 7349322223

HRBR Layout 40X60 North Facing 3Bedroom Independent Building for Sale Good Location 32000/- Per Sqft Nego. Contact: 9342560839

HSR LAYOUT

HSR LAYOUT 2nd SECTOR BDA SITE ,PARK FACING 30x40, 4 BHK DUPLEX HOUSE FOR SALE 4.75 Cr. Call:98451 63969/ 98864 09386.

HSR Layout 1st sector 28th Main Corner Auction Site for Sale 1043 Sqft (south east) with Borewell sanction Plan Contact IMRAN. 9845952411

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Contact 8050543901.

Brokers welcome

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RESIDENTIAL Plot For Sale North Facing 4th T Block Jayanagar 28th Main 35th Cross 2700 Sqft Contact: Rajesh Talreja 9845302727

SALE Jayanagar 4th Blk 40x60 N/F 5BHK Duplex House & 40x60 W/F Commercial Site Prime Locn Serious Buyers Call "GOLDLINE" 98450 33756

JAYNAGAR 3bhk 2100sft 3.25cr, All Amenities. G floor , N facing Newly built, not negotiable. Parasmani Regency 9844210133

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SALE
ON STRR
(Upcoming)

3 ACRES, Clear Titles, Agricultural Land Between Anekal to Thally Road, Rs. 3 Cr. per Acre. Contact: 9844400002

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COMMERCIAL
TENANTED PROPERTY
SINGLE FLOOR
4800 Sqft
@ J.P.NAGAR

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4BHK, 4000 Sqft Luxury high end flats, Judicial layout gkvk, ONE Floor ONE Unit 100% floor FLAT Sale: 8088330330, www.govianu.com

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For Rent 2 BHK
Rs. 28000/- including maintenance, close to Forum South Mall, near Konanakunte Metro Station, Kumaran School

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ISRO Layout 40x60 E/F Residential Site, 40x60 Commercial North Face, 30x50 E/F Semi Commercial Genuine Buyers Brokers Excuse Ct: 99643 86464

WANTED Anjanapura Banashankari 6th Stage JP Nagar Near Kanakapura Road Any Measurement Immediate Settlement Call: 9964627255

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KUMBALGODU

INDUSTRIAL Plot for Sale at Kumbalgodu: Size: 37,376 Sq ft CORNER SITE (Dimensions: 146 sq ft x 256 sq ft).Contact: Puneeth Jain: 98448 30500

India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.
(A Government of India Undertaking)
Ashok Events Division
SCOPE Complex, Core 8, 6th Floor, 7 Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003

Tender Notice

Online digitally signed bids are invited by India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) from interested eligible agencies for Rate Contract For Appointment of Agency having set up in Delhi/NCR for Providing Conference Audio-Visual Equipment arrangements, Conference Photography & related Services on hire basis for period of 2 years (PAN India)

Timelines are as follows:

- The detailed tender document can be viewed and downloaded from the e-procurement portal **https://etenders.gov.in** from **21st March 2026 10:00 hrs.** to **10th April 2026 18:00 hrs.**
- The last date and time for online submission of bids is **10th April 2026 up to 18:00 hrs.**
- **Hard copy submissions will not be accepted.** Only digitally signed online submissions through the above portal shall be considered.

Note: All corrigendum, addendum, amendments and extensions related to this tender will be published only on the above-mentioned website. Interested agencies are advised to visit the site regularly for updates.

For queries, please contact:
Office of the HoD, (Ashok Events Division), ITDC
Phone: +91-11-26872616

HoD (Ashok Events Division)
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NELAMANGALA 50x80 Site for Sale East Facing BMRDA Approved, & Proposed 300 feet IRR Ring Rd facing Price 5000/- Contact- 7353600000/ 9164902747

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PURVA BLUBELLE Adjacent to Magadi Road Metro station RAJAJINAGAR 3 BHK & Exclusive 5 BHK Flats + Servant Room with all luxurious Amenities, Only few units left for Sale Call Owner : 9844027560.

3BHK, 2000 Sqft Luxury High end Flat for Sale, Rajajinagar main road near Navrang theatre. Phone 8088330330. www.govianu.com

RICHMOND TOWN

COMMERCIAL Plot For Sale East Facing 4000 Sqft K H Road Double Road Close To Richmond Circle. Contact Rajesh Talreja 9845302727

RMV EXTENSION

SALE
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SITE

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HOUSE for Sale at HMT Layout near CBI Road R.T. Nagar 40x60 E/F, 5 BHK Duplex Price 9.5 Cr Ngo. Call:9448046717/9448818742

PLOT for Sale 5900 sft plot North facing Ganesha layout Sultan palaya Rate Rs 13000 psft Rajan Sood 9980132655

SADASHIVA NAGAR

LOWER PALACE ARCADE Near SADASHIV NAGAR Old House 20X25 For Immediate Sale. Contact: Thomas 9448473358

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NEHRUNAGAR 1st Cross Nehrunagar Sheshadripuram 2592 sqft 3BHK Prime location/Fully Furnished Flat Available for Sale Only for Vegetarian Call: 9632876461.

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VISVESWARAIAH LAYOUT

30X40 BDA East Facing Fully Furnished 3 BHK house with lift and home theatre for sale Contact : 8147115323

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SALE : Prestige Park View, Whitefield, 3BHK, 1839 SBUA, Semi-Furnished, 15th Floor, West Facing, Price - 2.75 CR. Call - 91082 53029, 91080 45702

VILLA for sale in Chaithanya Oakville, BUA 5850sft Plot 4500sft, East facing with private pool and a great deal. Price 6.75cr Contact 9845264696

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60*90
COMMERCIAL
SITE

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40X60 East and West Facing BDA "A" Khattha Site for sale with good amenities Yelahanka Sathanuru near Country Club Contact: 9513499959

SITE FOR SALE JUDICIAL LAYOUT, YELAHANKA. Near playground 40 x 60 Site South facing. Contact : 9440620970.

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hrdept.aditya@gmail.com Contact No.: 9620619000

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3BHK, 1500sqft Luxury High end Flat for Sale, OC received, in YESHWANTPUR. For more details please contact: 8088330330 www.govianu.com

LAND FOR SALE

2ACRES Hi-Profitable Land - Sale @ Kanuvai-Anaikatti Highway, Coimbatore, TN. Brokers Excuse. 9443809741.

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FOR Sale fully furnished 5 BHK Premium 3003sft apart 300mt from Trinity Circle,MG road, opp FAP school,Ulsoor with 2 parking.cont 8217483566.

3-BHK 1915 sf Premium Apt Sobha Neopolis West/Garden Facing Gated Complex Handover Oct 2026. Rs.2.85 Cr (Nego) Contact Owner 9886394328.

3.5BHK SALE Lux. Flat, East Facing, Italian Marble, 2867 SFt,Furn., 2 Car Park, 7th flr,Siroya Environ Apts, RT Ngr, Hebbal #9341231209

SALE, Yelahanka New Town, 2 BHK Flat EF 55 lac 3 BHK triplex 4th phase 1.25cr 30x40 NF site Judicial 21K/Sft.,30x36 EF house B Sector 18k/ Sft : 9886818563/9342866213.

FOR Sale 45x80, BDA North East Facing Site in Anjanapura 3rd A Block, with Fencing on 60' Road, Clear Title, Single Owner call Rajesh 98451 67755

2-BHK for sale in Beliandur. 4th Floor. 1281 sq. ft. Semi Furnished. List. Balconies. Covered car park. Facing east entrance. Cont. 8105155857

60×40 site South facing, 2nd block Vishweshwaraiya layout, on 60feet road, Suitable for commercial building, please contact 9113013428

2 BHK BDA Flat for Sale, Fully Furnished, Kondasapura Biddrahhali,10 km to ITPL.. Price 83 Lakh Mob - 9900127979

MYSORE

3BHK Flat for sale with Pooja room in Vontikoppal, Mysore. Price: 2 Crore. Negotiable. Genuine Buyers Call: 9980014574

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FLAT Resale NrKodigehalli Railway station -2BHK, 2nd floor BUA-1133 sqft, UDS-419 sqft East Facing, CCP, Lift, cctv. 8778864431

OUTSIDE BANGALORE

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DUPLEX Villa with assured rental 1lakh per month for Sale part of 5 Star upcoming resort in Chikamagalur. Call 8088330330

MYSORE

3BHK High-end Luxury Flats, Govianu Gurikar Luxuria - Mysore, Zoo road, opposite to Gandhi park, Ready to occupy, 8088330330, www.govianu.com

TUMKUR

A KHATA TUDA plot at Hirehalli/Tumkur 1.9 KM from National highway Contact 7899028881/9964705451

A) 15000SQFT TUDA approved site, Jaganathpura Tumkur B) 1200 SQFT TUDA site Belagumba Tumkur, near NH4. 8088330330

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FULLY FURNISHED 7500 sqft + 7500 sqft + 4500 sqft, Near Electronic City 30 Meters Singasandra Metro Station. Contact : 9902401668, 9845011628

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SAHAKARNAGAR Commercial retail space sale, tenant paying 2.5L per flr, 2500 sqft luxury one floor one unit 100% flr office space: 8088330330

FOR Rent commercial 2500 sqft built, 900 Sqft open space, 1st floor, west facing, opp. Madavan park, Jayanagar. Contact: 9845004514/ 9845228043

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INDUSTRIAL Building for Rent with Power, 11,000 Sq Ft. Suitable for Warehouse/ Godown/ Industry @ Attibele KIADB Idustrial area. 500 mtrs from NH 44. Contact: 9845241111/ 9845341111

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- Auto Clean
- HD Filter with Anti Virus Protection

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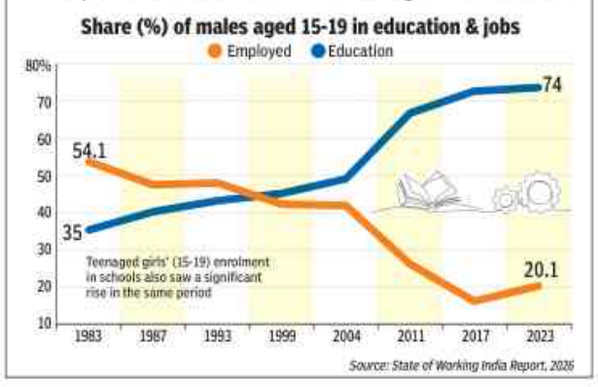
STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Indian teens mark shift in preference for education

In 1983, over half of Indian adolescent boys aged 15-19 were employed. By 2023, education enrolment rose to 74%, reflecting the impact of child labour laws and the 2009 Right to Education Act



Source: State of Working India Report, 2026

HC: Detention order can't be invoked in 'normal situation'

Quashes Order Detaining Man Involved In Money Dispute Under Goondas Act

K.Kaushik@timesofindia.com

Madurai: A preventive detention order can never be a substitute when a situation can be dealt with under normal criminal law, Madras HC has said, quashing a detention order passed against a man over a murder case involving a money dispute in Tamil Nadu's Trichy district.

In a solitary case, a preventive detention order could only be passed if the case was of a nature that could be prejudicial to the maintenance of peace, a division bench of Justices N Anand Venkatesh and P Dhanabal ruled.

"However, such a detention order cannot be resorted to in each and every case involving murder. For instance, if a murder case has communal overtones, such an activity may be prejudicial to the maintenance of public order and public peace and may warrant the passing of a detention order. Therefore, there must be something more than the offence of murder committed to justify the passing of a detention order," the bench said.

In a solitary case, a preventive detention order could only be passed if the case was of a nature that could be prejudicial to the maintenance of peace and public order, the Madras high court said

The HC was hearing a petition filed by the wife of M Rajeshkumar, challenging his detention at Trichy Central Prison under the Goondas Act. Seeking quashing of the detention order passed by the Thanjavur district collector against her husband, the petitioner said it was based on a solitary case of murder.

The additional public prosecutor submitted before the court that the manner in which the murder took place in daylight warranted the passing of a detention order.

Rejecting the contention, the bench said: "For every case of murder, the authorities cannot resort to passing detention orders under Act 14 of 1982 (Goondas Act)." The court set aside the detention order and directed the man to be released forthwith.

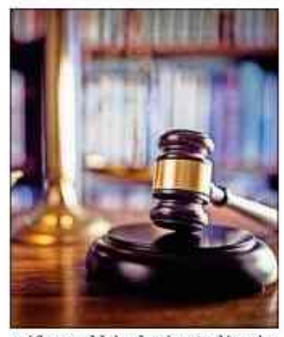
The bench sought to impose costs on the authorities for the erroneous detention order, but relented after the prosecutor submitted that he would immediately raise this issue with govt and ensure that detention orders were not passed in a mechanical fashion in all cases involving a solitary incident. He assured that the authorities would be careful while passing such detention orders in future.

The judges then directed that such instructions be issued immediately. They observed that if the court found a detention order had been passed in any other case in future that could be dealt with under normal criminal law, it would be forced to interfere and impose costs.

'86-yr-old can live in ancestral house': HC bins son's plea

Lalmohan Patnaik | TNN

After being forced by his son to leave his parental house at Baramunda, the retired govt employee sought protection and property revocation



Cuttack: The Orissa high court refused to interfere with an order allowing an 86-year-old man to reside on the ground floor of his ancestral house in Bhubaneswar, reiterating that laws protecting senior citizens must be interpreted to advance their welfare.

Justice Ananda Charan Behera recently upheld an Aug 7, 2025, order of the sub-collector, Bhubaneswar, who was acting as the tribunal under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

After being forced by his son to leave his parental house at Baramunda, the 86-year-old retired govt employee sought protection and property revocation under the welfare law, stating that he was being harassed and evicted.

His son lives on the first floor with his family. The elderly father sought to spend his remaining years on the ground floor of the same property. The tribunal directed the son to vacate the ground floor of the house at Baramunda and behave respectfully, while terming the property dispute civil in nature. Dissatisfied, both father and son appealed in the high court seeking relief.

Taking note of the father's age, the death of his wife, and his desire to live in his ancestral home, the high court found the tribunal's order to be in line with Rule 19 of the Orissa Maintenance of Parents and Senior Citizens Rules, 2009, which ensures that senior citizens live with "security and dignity".

In a March 17 order, Justice Behera held that the order was passed to achieve the "noble object" of the welfare law and saw no grounds for interference. Finding no merit in the son's plea, the court dismissed the petition, effectively affirming the elderly man's right to reside peacefully in his ancestral property.

Jinnah chapter stirs row, varsity sets up panel

Jammu: The vice-chancellor of University of Jammu has constituted a high-level committee to examine the political science postgraduate course syllabus after the inclusion of a chapter on Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah's political thought snowballed into a controversy.

According to an order issued by the office of the dean of academic affairs, the committee has been tasked with "thoroughly reviewing the issue and submitting its report at the earliest". The panel will be headed by Naresh Padha of the physics department and will comprise the heads of the departments of philosophy, history and sociology, and the director of the department of strategic and regional studies. The assistant registrar will serve as the member secretary.

On Friday, ABVP activists had staged a protest at the university, demanding the withdrawal of the chapter on Jinnah. The protesters, led by ABVP's J&K secretary Sannak Shrivats, shouted slogans against the administration and warned that they would be "compelled to launch a strong democratic agitation across J&K".

Shrivats said the political science department at Jammu University presents Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Ali Jinnah as minority representatives, raising concerns as both backed the two-nation theory and played a role in Partition. TNN

Air India to have strict cabin crew fitness policy from May 1

Times News Network

New Delhi: Air India will have a strict cabin crew fitness policy from May 1. It has linked meeting BMI norms to flying eligibility and those who are non compliant will face loss of pay. While BMI of 18–24.9 is the "desired range"; underweight crew can fly only if they clear medical and functional assessments. Crew members with BMI of over 30 will fall under obese category and be immediately derostered, placed on loss of pay until they meet norms. A failure to clear assessments in under/overweight categories can also lead to derostering and loss of pay.

Obese crew will be instantly grounded and put on loss of pay. Within seven days, they will need to undergo medical tests. They will get 30 days to be within the acceptable BMI otherwise a letter of caution will be issued. At the third such instance, 30 more days and a letter of final warning are issued.

Kerala doctor's murderer gets life term, her kin to seek death penalty

Kollam: Nearly three years after the murder of a young house surgeon inside a govt hospital sent shockwaves across Kerala, a court in Kollam district on Saturday sentenced the accused, Sandeep G, to life imprisonment. The family of the victim, Dr Vandana Das, expressed dissatisfaction with the verdict and said they would challenge it and seek death penalty, while the Indian Medical Association urged state govt to file an appeal to ensure maximum punishment.

The additional district and sessions court-I, Kollam, found Sandeep guilty of murdering Dr Vandana, who was on duty at at a taluk hospital, on May 10, 2023. He was convicted under multiple IPC sections along with provisions of the Kerala Healthcare Service Persons Act.

The convict was awarded life sentence and a fine of Rs 1 lakh for murder, besides being handed multiple jail terms ranging from 1 month to 10 years, and fines ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000, under different provisions. Court ordered most sentences to run consecutively, some concurrently, and directed fines be paid as compensation to doctor's family and injured. TNN

5 members of a family, including 3 children, found dead in Kochi

Kochi: Five members of a family, including three children, were found dead at a two-storeyed house on Karshaka Road in Vaduthala, Kochi, on Saturday morning. It is likely that the adults died by suicide after killing the children, police said.

The deceased are Aswathi Nair, 36, her mother Sreekumari, 58, and Aswathi's minor children — two boys aged 14 and 4 and a 2-year-old daughter, police said. The adults were found hanging while the children were found dead on the bed. A senior officer with the city police said they recovered a suicide note from the house.

"Aswathi's husband had acute liver disease. Before his death, the couple became estranged. After she left for her house, the husband's family members and some locals tried to mediate between them for reconciliation, but it failed. The husband later died by suicide last Aug. In the suicide note we found on Saturday, Aswathi said her husband's family is blaming her for his suicide," the officer said. He said that as per preliminary investigation, about a month after the husband's death, the woman prepared a will stating that after the death of her and her children, their assets should go to one "Providence Home".

"We suspect that the woman must have been contemplating suicide for some time, as the will was made back then (Sept 2025). We don't know what this Providence Home is, and efforts are on to identify it," the officer said. He said the family came to Kochi only two months ago. "The older boy had some health issues and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city. We found medicines at their rented house, and are trying to collect his medical history," the officer said. TNN

34001/235/2526

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER ELECTRICAL CIRCLE (R&B) NIRMAN SOUDHA BHUBANESWAR
E-mail seec.bbsr2010@gmail.com
Bid Identification No.S.E.E.C (R&B) 36/2025-26
No 1104/Date 18-03-2026

The Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for E.I. works which are to be received through online bidding, double cover system as detailed in : **https://tendersorissa.gov.in.** The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from dt.25.03.2026 at 05.00 P.M. to dt.09.04.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened dt.10.04.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**.

Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, BBSR
OIPR-34001/34006/1/25-26/0024

32001/232/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
CENTRAL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR
'e' Procurement Notice No. ACECIC - 15/ 2025-26

Procurement officer	Bid Identification No.	Name of Work	Cost of Work (Rs. in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs.) E.M.D.	Cost of Bid documents (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Bid documents available online for bidding From	Bid documents available online for bidding To	Date of opening of Technical Bid	Period of completion of work
ACE, CIC, Bhubaneswar	PRD-08/ 2025-26	Protection to Scoured Bank on KSDR Embankment from RD.13.400 Km to 13.725 Km.	248.90	249000/- (On Line)	10000/- (On Line)	"B" & "A" Class	24.03.2026 At 10.00 Hours	07.04.2026 At 17.00 Hours	08.04.2026 At 11.00 Hours	06 (Six Calendar Month)

e-mail ID: **secic_dowr@yahoo.com**
Further details conditions can be seen from Govt. website **www.tenderorissa.gov.in**

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OIPR-32001/32160/1/25-26/0001

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sandeep Kumar Jain r/at No.11, Subbannachar Lane, 1st Cross Cottonpet, Bengaluru 560053 declare that my name is mentioned as Sandeep Kumar in my SSLC Marks Card and Passport and in all other documents as Sandeep Kumar Jain. I further declare that both the names belong to me vide affidavit dt. 17.03.2026 sworn before Notary M Prabhakar, Bangalore.

I, Manish V Yadwad, residing at Vaishnavi ARS Gardenia, B-407, S.M. Road, Prashanth Nagar, T. Dasarahalli Post, Bangalore – 560057, hereby declare that I have changed my name to "Manish Yadwad" for all future official purposes. This change is affirmed vide affidavit dated 20.03.2026, sworn before Notary V. Anjanappa, Bangalore.

I S CHANDSAB S/O SHAIK HUSSAIN Date of Birth 01/06/1968 Residing at Annasandraplaya,HAL Post,Bangalore-17 have changed my Name to S CHAND SAB Vide Affidavit Dated 19/03/2026 from N Ramesh Gowda

I Veena D/o Basavaraj Biradar aged 40 years residing at D1003 Nikoo Homes 2, Bhartiya City Thanisandra Main Road, Yelahanka Bengaluru -560064 have changed name to VEENA BIRADAR D/O BASAVARAJ BIRADAR vide affidavit dated 19/02/2026 sworn before notary Rajashekhar S.Patil.

25001/353/2526

By E_Mail/e-Despatch
E_MailID:serw_balasore@yahoo.in
Ph-No-06782/260318
Balia, Balasore

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Work
Identification. No:- Online Tender- Road N.C.B. No. 63 for 2025-26

Letter No. 1462 Date.17/03/2026

1. Name of the work : **(MMSY- Improvement to existing RD road)**
2. Total No. of work : **4 Nos. of work.**
3. Estimated Cost : As per annexure
4. Eligible Class of Contractor : As per annexure.
5. Period of Completion : As per annexure.
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding From	Availability of tender On-line for bidding To	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O S.E.R.W. Circle, Balasore Technical Bid	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O S.E.R.W. Circle, Balasore Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	NCB No.-63 of 2025-26	25.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	15.04.2026 Upto 5.00 P.M.	15.04.2026 Upto 5.00 P.M.	16.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated latter

● Further details can be seen from the website: **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
R.W. Circle, Balasore
OIPR-25001/25105/1/25-26/0008

34001/203/2526

E-mail ID:cebuildings_orissa@yahoo.co.in
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OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA
NIRMAN SOUDHA, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

File No- B-II-(H.E.)-15/2025 Lr. No.-8608 Bhubaneswar, the 12th Mar., 2026
Invitation for Bids
Bid Identification No. CE-Bldg-I-56/2025-26

1.	The Chief Engineer, Buildings-I, Odisha, Bhubaneswar, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for the works, **(1) "Construction of Annex Building with Training Administrative Support Facilities and 500 Seater Auditorium of ROTI, Gothapatana, Bhubaneswar" (2)"Construction of New Circuit House Building at Dhenkanal" & (3) "Construction of Academic Block building (G+6) at Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Balasore (Completion of balance work)"** as detailed below.		
2.	Nature of work	:	Building Works
3.	No. of work	:	03 Nos.
4.	Bid Cost.	:	Rs. 10,000/-
5.	Class of Contractor	:	'A/ Special/ Super
6.	Availability of Bid Documents in the website	:	From dt.26.03.2026 to 17.00 Hours of dt.17.04.2026.
7.	Date of Opening of Bid	:	Dt.18.04.2026 at 11:30 AM.
8.	The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.		

Sd/-
Chief Engineer,
Buildings-I, Odisha
OIPR-34001/34117/1/25-26/0037

PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT
Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness & Resilience Project (U-PREPARE)
5th Floor, USDMA Building, 36, IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun Email id : procurement.uprepare@gmail.com; Website: www.u-prepare.com

REFERENCE No.951/01/TA/ULMMC/PMU/U-PREPARE/2025 **Date : 20.03.2026**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Government of Uttarakhand has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the Uttarakhand Disaster Preparedness & Resilience Project (U-PREPARE), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the following assignment:

Sl. No.	Assignment title	To be downloaded from
1	Consulting Services for Preparing an Institutional Development Plan for The Uttarakhand Landslide Mitigation and Management Centre (ULMMC) (Package No. 01/TA/ULMMC/PMU/ U-PREPARE/2025)	www.uktenders.gov.in
2	ICT Tool for Labour Law Compliance Tracking & Monitoring	www.uktenders.gov.in
3	Deployment of Labour Management Specialist under PMU (U-PREPARE)	www.u-prepare.com

Sd/-
Program Director

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
(E-tendering Tender Notice
No. DYCE-C-BPL-1-01-2026, dated 16/03/2026)
E-Tender on behalf of the President of India acting through Deputy chief Engineer (Construction)-I, West Central Railway, Bhopal for the following work (Two Packet System):-, **Tender No.** : DYCE-C-BPL1-01-2026, **Brief Description:** Construction of 04 no's Imp, 26 no's Major bridges in Bina-BPL-ET (Kalhar-Itarsi) in connection with BINA-BPL-ITARSI 4th LINE RAILWAY PROJECT in the State of Madhya Pradesh, **Approx tender value :** 29692.79 Lakh, **Earnest Money (Rs.):** 14846400.00, **Due date of Closing of tender:** 20/05/2026 at 15.00 hrs., **Completion period:** 2 (Two) years including harvest & monsoon period. The complete of above E-Tender is available on "https://www.ireps. gov.in: and also placed on the Notice Board of office of the Dy.CE(C)-I/West Central Railway/Bhopal. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shal not be accepted against above tender, Corrigendum, if any issued in connection with tender, will be available on above mentioned website only.
(Sd.)
Dy. Chief Engineer (Constn.)-I
West Central Railway, Bhopal
स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

Youth held for molesting actor in Kochi

Kochi: Palarivattom police arrested a youth for allegedly misbehaving with an actor near Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Kaloor, Kochi, on Friday.

The arrested person has been identified as Vibin Roy (39) of Kathrikadavu, Kochi. According to police, the accused was a fan of the actor involved and maintained a fan account on Instagram. He used to chat with her using the account. "He mistook the responses to be a sign of personal attachment and thought that she liked him. She blocked him on Instagram after feeling that the talks were crossing limits. He later tried to chat using another account as well," said an officer. The officer added that the woman went to a tattoo studio in Kaloor on Thursday and Roy tried to meet her.

"The woman has filed a complaint alleging that the accused touched her inappropriately. Hence, an FIR has been lodged for outraging the modesty of a woman. He was presented in court on Saturday and the court granted him bail," said the officer. Vibin Roy was arrested from his house on Friday. Police said that he was an MBA holder and worked with an IT firm in Kochi. TNN

2 tourists dead, 2 critical after car falls into gorge

Nainital: Two tourists were killed and two others were critically injured after their car plunged nearly 250 metres into a gorge on Jeolikote-Bhowali Road near Gethia in Tallital area of Nainital district around 8.30am on Saturday, police said.

Rescue teams pulled out all four occupants from the wreckage. Abhiraj, 26, and Ankit Chaudhary, 25, both residents of Unnao, died at the spot, while Atul Dubey, 26, and Shyam, 30, both from Unnao, were given preliminary treatment and then referred to Sushila Tiwari Hospital in Haldwani.

The accident was reported through Dial 112, following which teams from Tallital police, SDRF and fire brigade reached the spot and launched a rescue operation. Police said the vehicle was travelling from Unnao to Jageshwar Dham when it lost control on a hilly stretch. TNN

2 B'deshi brothers left off voter roll granted CAA certificates

Sanjib Chakraborty | TNN

Kolkata: Two brothers who trace their roots to Bangladesh and have been living with their families in Bengal's North 24 Parganas district for nearly 40 years were granted citizenship under CAA. However, their names were struck off the post-SIR final voter list, in the latest instance of CAA applicants being omitted from rolls and then getting their citizenship certificates.

ENDURING ROOTS: Laxman (L) and Premchand have been living in Bengal for 40 years

Laxman Bhadra and Premchand Bhadra migrated from Bangladesh's Comilla. For years, they allegedly lacked proper identity documents. Both applied under CAA last Nov, and received confirmation messages. They were recently issued citizenship certificates.

However, despite submitting enumeration forms during SIR, their names did not feature in the final electoral roll. "We got approval messages for our citizenship applications in Feb but our names were deleted from the final list. We have applied for inclusion again now we have our certificates," Laxman said. Twelve others from the district also received certificates. Two of them were marked 'under adjudication' while one name was deleted.

The Union home ministry recently constituted a second empowered committee for Bengal to expedite citizenship application processing under CAA. This followed reports that nearly 5.5 lakh applicants from Matua-dominated belts in North 24 Parganas, Nadia and East Burdwan districts were called for SIR hearings over logical discrepancies.

The issue has gained political significance ahead of assembly elections, with allegations of exclusions affecting refugee communities, particularly among Matuas.

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Himalayan glaciers shrinking faster than estimated: Report

'Ice Loss Rate Accelerated In Recent Years'

Gaurav.Talwar
@timesofindia.com

Data revealed the region lost 12% of its total glacier area and 9% of its ice reserves between 1990 and 2020

Dehradun: A recent report by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has painted an alarming picture on the state of glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) — which have shrunk faster than previously estimated — with new data pointing to a sharp acceleration in ice loss in the last decade.

Data revealed that the region lost 12% of its total glacier area and 9% of its ice reserves between 1990 and 2020, with the pace of loss accelerating sharply.

Prepared by Sudan Bikash Maharjan and Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, the report points out that the glacier decline is not only ongoing but intensifying. It notes that while glaciers have been losing ice over several decades, the rate of ice loss has increased significantly in recent years, "with the average rate in the 21st century roughly twice that observed at the end of the 20th century".

The ICIMOD study, which maps over 63,000 glaciers in the region, finds that glacier retreat is no longer gradual but accelerating, particularly after 2010, and most prominently in the eastern and central HKH. Smaller glaciers have been the most vulnerable, shrinking rapidly and, in some cases, fragmenting or disappearing altogether.

"The pace of glacier loss has accelerated sharply since 2010, especially in the eastern and central HKH, where smaller glaciers are most vulnerable. Though located in high mountains, these glaciers are deeply connected to rivers, economies and communities downstream. Their retreat is increasing uncertainty over water availability and heightening risks from hazards such as glacial lake outburst floods, landslides and avalanches," said Pema Gyamtsho, DG ICIMOD.

The findings highlight stark regional contrasts. While parts of the Karakoram range showed relative stability, with the glacier area declining by 0.9%, other regions experienced dramatic losses. The Ganges and Brahmaputra river basins, home to the largest glacier areas outside the Indus basin, experienced the greatest total area loss over the past three decades, with reductions of approximately 21% and 16%, respectively. The report further attributes the accelerating glacier loss to rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns.

Seer's death on Delhi-Agra NH triggers protest, police injured

Sudeep.Lavania
@timesofindia.com

Agra: A seer associated with cow vigilantism in Mathura was crushed to death by a speeding truck in dense fog on the busy Delhi-Agra NH early Sat, triggering a massive protest by locals after rumours spread that the man, Chandrashekhar alias 'Farsa Wale Baba', was "deliberately run over by cow smugglers".

According to police, additional security forces, with Provincial Armed Constabulary had to be called to bring the situation under control. Police resorted to tear gas shelling amid intense stone-pelting by a large crowd which blocked NH-19 for over three hours. Vehicles, including those belonging to police and other officials, were damaged. At least three cops suffered injuries and about 10 protesters were held, officials said. The incident happened at a time when President Droupadi Murmu was on a 'parikrama' at Govardhan parvat.

CBI questions 3 top executives of Anil Ambani-led Reliance Grp

Rajshekhar.Jha
@timesofindia.com

CBI issued summons to Satish Seth and Gautam Doshi, both former group managing directors, for examination in connection with the FIR registered following a formal complaint by SBI

New Delhi: Deepening its probe into the alleged multi-crore fraud involving Reliance Communications (RCOM) and the State Bank of India (SBI), CBI has questioned three former top-tier executives of the Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group.

The agency issued summons to Satish Seth and Gautam Doshi, both former group managing directors, for examination in connection with the FIR registered following a formal complaint by SBI.

This followed the questioning of a third former group managing director, Amitabh Jhunjhunwala. Seth, who previously held the position of vice chairman at Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and served on the board of Reliance Telecom Ltd (RTL), was questioned alongside Doshi, who was also a board member of RTL.

Sources said that the CBI examined Jhunjhunwala over a three-day period leading up to the scheduled appearance of Anil Ambani on March 19 and 20.

Jhunjhunwala, a long-time confidant of the group, formerly served as the vice chairman of Reliance Capital. The three executives were central figures in the Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group for over 15 years.

All three have since moved on to independent ventures. Jhunjhunwala is currently an independent fund manager with operations in Dubai and Singapore. Seth is now engaged in real estate and software ventures.

Doshi, officials said, currently leads a prominent tax and mergers & acquisitions advisory firm, in addition to serving on the boards of major companies.

When contacted, the Reliance group refused to comment saying these officials were not with the Reliance group anymore.

Supreme Court had earlier asked CBI to file separate FIRs into complaints of different banks against Anil Ambani group companies.

Last year CBI filed a case against M/s Reliance Communications based on a complaint lodged by the SBI, which is the lead bank of a consortium consisting of 11 banks, in an alleged fraud case of Rs 2,929 crore.

According to CBI, the complaint is based on a forensic audit report that alleges large-scale diversion and misuse of loan funds through interlinked and circuitous transactions among group entities during the period 2013-17, resulting in wrongful loss of Rs 2,929 crore to SBI out of total exposure of Rs 19,694 crore involving 17 public sector banks.

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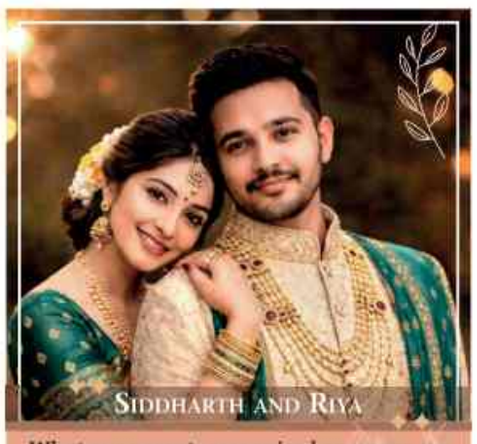

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BRAHMIN

TAMIL, BRAHMIN Kashyapa Gothram, 31 years, tall, good physique, single, IT Sr Manager, earning,70-80 Lakh, pa, Well to do Seeking a suitable unmarried bride from any Brahmin community, currently settled in Bangalore. Mobile 9900359142 Ramakarishnan

ALLIANCE invited from girls of any State for our son B.Com MBA 1988 born/6'3" doing own business in Puducherry (Pondicherry) having good income, # 9894750160

29/5'10" B.Tech IIT,MBA (IIM) Soft.Dvlp.Wkg, MNC 95L+Tetotaller Boy, Fthr IAS Ofcr,Elite Family,Caste no bar,No dowry. 8983013664 b23rim@gmail.com

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For Fair, Handsome Brahmin Boy, Born 1991, 5'8". MBA from prestigious Stanford University (USA), BTech (CSE) from NIT (Double Gold Medalist). Rich Affluent Nuclear Business Family of IITians and IIMians from Bhopal, MP.
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ENGINEERS

BENGALI Hindu boy, 33yrs, 5'5". Senior Engineer in Ireland. MSc Electrical Engg. (UK). Seeking a well educated girl. Ph No: 9445397680

USA H'some 98US born 5'7" Sr. S/W Engg/MS Fintech Working. Perf:DOC/CS/Fin Hindu girl from NY/NJ Call/WA +13073148860

GOVERNMENT/ DEFENCE

DEFENCE Class1 Officer,Sheikh-Siddiqui boy 28/5'8",Father National Highway Class1 Officer,Sister Commercial Pilot,Lucknow based#9450447406

BY RELIGION
HINDU

LOOKING for a educated, slim and fair Hindu bride, with a minimum height of 5'3", maximum age 38, preferably settled in US and from a good family for a Bengali, 39 years, 5'9", fair and slim, Scientist groom settled in US having permanent residency status. Please call us at 8591138208 or email with CV to mail id roy.asim@icloud.com

DEAF/MUTE Mallu/Hindu MCA/April 87/5.6 Working at IIMB. Seeks Professionally Qualified working girl. Contact: 7994070194

HINDU Except SC/ST Age 43, Business – Rs. 40,000/- No Expectations Only Tamilnadu. Ct : 9952492395 / 9944499779

GENERAL
CASTE NO BAR

B.Engg/Masters in Engineering Brahmin boy Dec 1995/ 5'10' Wkg Asst Manager reputed firm Mumbai 10LPA. Parents Government employees seeks Prof.Qual.working girl . Whatsapp 8779631640

MUMBAI based Jain vegetarian family seeks alliance for son 34 years, 5'11", Masters from Carnegie Melon, working abroad, well travelled and well read, having good perspective of different cultures and countries, having healthy and active life, competing in martial arts. Looking for bride in 25-29 age bracket, masters from good school, having good relationship with parents and siblings, has lived by herself, healthy living with sports or any physical activity, vegetarian or vegan. Cast, religion and race no bar. Contact: lokendrachandra@gmail.com

AIRLINE Pilot (b. 1994, 5'10", fair, from a well-settled, liberal family) based at Bangalore seeks a cultured, attractive girl from a respectable family. Caste no bar. Email: subhash.health@gmail.com

ALLIANCE invited for Mr.Vinay Murthy, BE, 37 Yrs, Self Employed, S/o.T D Murthy, Retd Sr.Exe, BHEL, Bhopal. Looking for a suitable bride. Caste and Religion No bar. Contact:9425604412

PQM for Aggarwal boy, 1983 /5'7", never married, Software Engr, well-settled in USA. Seeks prf qualified, wkg girl settled in USA/Canada. Caste no bar. Cont: 8824587119, aggupta210@gmail.com

SAXENA Boy,32/5'11",BTech/MTech, IIT Roorkee, wrkg. at Bengaluru, handsome salary, seeks educated wrkg. Hindu girl, Wapp 9810249099

PQM for B.TECH (comp) never married boy Sept 95/6'1 Wkg MNC Pune. Seeks for btful wkg girl. WhatsApp # +91 83198 77721

PUNJABI Khatri Boy 1993,5'11" B.Tech, reputed job at MNC in Odisha requires homely girl. (9914687015)

COSMOPOLITAN

Beautiful,Slim 5'4"+ Vegetarian Hindu Upper Caste match for 5'8",Sept.1997 born MP Cadre IPS,IAS,PG Doctor,Professor Preferred.Contact:9770222646,8269997879

UP Br 38/ 6'2" MBA, BE Sr VP, US MNC London, UK citizen. nev/m, n'mglk boy seeks tall PQ upper caste girl employed/ employable in London. WhatsApp Call : 9717500885

AMERICAN Non-Indian 38 Teacher Settled in California Step-Mom Maharashtrian. Traveled India Often. Seeks English-speaking Bride 27-35 NatureMan555A@gmail.com

SECOND MARRIAGE

SUCCESSFUL 37, highly-educated (Harvard), outgoing professional. Cultured family. Seeks compatible bride. Caste no bar. Call/WA 9345 634 365

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WANTED GROOMS
BY CASTE
BRAHMIN

BTech, Brahmin, North Indian beautiful girl, 5'6", working in Bangalore. Father Lecturer (Maths). Seeks prof qual Brahmin groom. Ph no: 9414391911.

AFFLUENT Tyagi Brahmin industrialist family invites alliance for their accomplished and good-looking daughter, born in 1993, height 5'4", well-educated (MBA; CFA Level 1 cleared). Seeking suitable match from Govt Class I Officer or reputed industrialist family. Em: director@nicholas.co.in Contact: 9795922999

ONLY USA based Br boy for Br b'ful girl 1993/5'2",BTech,MS -N.Corolina,wkg S/W DevOps, Rhode Island.Fathr retd Depty Excise Comm'r. M : 9286758693

BENGALI BRAHMIN GROOM wanted for our DAUGHTER 24/5'1 MA Lit Working as English Teacher in Chennai 9566040530, 6380897345

SM4 41/5'7" PQ Brahmin girl wkg in MNC in SG, I'less divorcee, veg, teetotaller, non-maglik, kkbvishakha@gmail.com

BEAUTIFUL vegetarian, 27, 163cm, cultured, well-educated professional (Master's). Seeks compatible groom. Community no bar. Call/WA 9345 634 365

RELIGION NO BAR

38/5'9" Unmarried Boy Caste No Bar Btech-MBA IIM, Working MNC 40LPA Business family Accept Div & Widow. 9407932961,7587736854

BY LANGUAGE
MALAYALI

REQ qualified working girl for 33 yr Nair Boy 5'8"/ 68 Kg based in Mumbai, CA & MBA working in a Big 4 consulting firm, from same community. Mob 9820102301

PUNJABI

PUNJABI Khatri Boy 34 yrs 175 cms BE working in L&T chennai, earning 45 LPA looking for punjabi/hindi bride. Whatsapp 9380715230

TELUGU

SEEKING BRIDE FOR MD-DOCTOR,35,REDDY,AFFLUENT FAMILY,.REQ:27-33,DOCTOR/IIT/NIT/BITS.CON:7396279292,8639232860

BY NATIONALITY
NRI/ GREEN CARD

PB Khatri 36/5'9" B.Tech, MBA Germany,Director MNC lives in Spain, Delhi based affluent family, seeks match India/Abroad. # 9717787954

WELL Settled Match for Brahmin, 39/5'1", Divorced, Beautiful, 70 LPA Bangalore (Jaipur Family). Upper Caste No Bar Send BHP 8949222130

B.TECH, ISB, 29/5'3", Brahmin, Delhi (Hyd)MNC, 56 LPA.Veg. Seeks well-settled, Edu Con: 9866009211

KAYASTHA

BHATNAGAR April 96, Non manglik, graduate Xavier's, journalism ACJ Chennai Working in leading channel. Mumbai. Father retd Army officer. Seeks well settled boy only from Mumbai 9752523699

DESIGN prof wkg in IT MNC Mumbai 28LPA 29/5'2" Girl.Father IRS (Retd) seeks highly Qual/Prof kayastha boy WhatsApp 7208706366

PQM Manglik Shrivastava 1997/5' Asst Director Glob Marketing & Advisory 25 LPA both parents doctor/ 9685105255/ 9425152272

KSHATRIYA

RAJPUT 31/5'7" slim, fair, girl, MBA from NMIMS (Mumbai) wkg in MNC, at present in London. Pref. IIT/-MBA match. Cont: 9984877000

JAIN

JAIN, slim, fair & beautiful girl (1996, 5'6"), Software Engineer in MNC (60 LPA, Bangalore) seeks qualified, vegetarian match. Tel: 9313573094

ALLIANCE INVITED
South Delhi based Jain family seeks alliance for daughter, born **January 1997, 5'6",** slim, graceful, highly qualified. Graduate from **Lady Shri Ram College (DU);** MBA from **Stanford University, USA.** Value-oriented, with a balanced traditional and global outlook. **Vegetarian Jain.**
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BY COMMUNITY
AGARWAL

ALLIANCE from Agarwal / Bania, US Citizens, Professionals / Business Man / Doctors for well qualified 40 year old Agarwal girl, 5'3", family oriented, fair complexion, US Citizen, working in N J, well established family. Preferred vegetarian & Non drinker. Share profile with latest picture at urwelcome163@aol.com

MBA, B'ful with modern out-look Aggarwal daughter May '86/5'5" Wrkg as Sr. Communication specialist in Delhi, both parents CAs. Seek Prof , Qlfd. well sttld never married groom from a reputed family, caste no bar. Send complete BHP to 9811036513, Email: caashokgupta@yahoo.co.in

ARORA

SEEKING Compatible Well Settled Businessman for a Charming, Very Fair, B'ful Well educated Girl, June 1986, 5'3" Caste No bar #9650002649

JAT

MBA BTech girl Sep 86/5'3 Job Bank Canada PR, US Green card, Father Doctor Delhi seeks Prof Qual boy-9818617806, aadi.rajyan@gmail.com

RAJPUT

27/5'4" B'FL, Fair LLB girl in top MNC Delhi Fthr Sr Civil Servt GOI Sks H'sm Rajput Boy Civil serv/Cls/IIT/IIM/corporate. 9971121316,9873434790

RAJPUT Kashyap 31/5'3" MA Eco-MadrasSch Eco/DU Wrkng NITI Ayog. JRF/GATE AIR-73 Father: CGM UPEIDA/Retd Army Offcr. Class-I/PSU/MNC Rajput Groom 8527756764

BY PROFESSION
DOCTORS

MD/MS BRAHMIN M4 MBBS, MS OPTHALMOLOGY GARHWALI BRAHMIN GIRL 1995/5'3" FROM A DOCTOR'S FAMILY 9411536600 7983038968

WANTED USA Resident Doctor (Medical only) / CPA for Green Card Doctor, Beautiful Punjabi Khatri Girl, Feb 94, Ph 8130656332

DOCTOR (MD, DM) Bengali, fair girl, 5'3" /1992, wkg in pvt hosp in Bangalore, seeks qualified groom preferably doctor, Ph: 8850348047

BY RELIGION
HINDU

ENGINEER post graduate HRD propertied in Bangalore beautiful young looking homely 1983-5'5" Hindu Balija Naidu single mother with daughter seeks suitable alliance contact 9444161790, 94442 72432

TRAINEE psychologist 81born divorcee 1son15 beaurucratic status family looking for well placed match Contact 9413340907

GIRL B.E(ECE), 23/5'4", Wkg prof., Bangalore. Seeks VP-Lingayat BE/IIT/MBBS prof., well-settled groom, 24-28. M: 9084511881/9353083079

SC BTech Girl June 95, 5 Ft, Vegan working in IT (software) Hyd 15 LPA looking for a suitable Hindu groom & wants to be childfree. WA 9960992226

BEAUTIFUL, 26yrs, 5'8" Engg, MBA(IIM). Req Tall, Handsome, professional, Affluent fly, settled in Hyd / Blr. / Mumbai. Ph: 9880754481

SM4 Fair Slim 5'2"/38yrs Hindu /Maharastrian girl MBA Nvr married working @Pune WA BHP # 9082726257

Looking for GROOM
Bangalore based Beautiful divorcee Bengali girl, height 5'3" age 31working as a Pilot in Airline as captain
Email at: Suchato2002@yahoo.com
Call /message on 8527014778

MUSLIM

PQM4 Sunni Syed, U. P. Girl, good looking, 1998born, 163cm, Grad, wrkg for an MNC at Bangalore, 6Lplus, from Syed/Shaikh boys from U. P. Wrkg at Bangalore. Send full biodata at shhrizwi53@yahoo.com .

SIKH

REQUIRED Sikh smart boy (Job/ Business) for a sikh postgraduate working girl Age 30, 5'3", Father well settled in Ahmedabad. Mo. 9824022325

GENERAL
CASTE NO BAR

SAINI, wanted suitable groom for a mangalik beautiful, well-educated girl (DOB 1999), fair, 5' 2" postgraduate , belonging to a respectable family. Working as a voice calling officer in a private bank at Noida. Groom should be well-settled, educated, non-smoker, teetotaler and from a good family background. Preference for professionals working in government / private sector. Caste no bar for suitable match. Interested families may contact: 8076176864, 9013766752

HINDU LINGAYAT telugu 28/172/B Tech computers Top NIT(2014-2018)/software job with 15 LPA (2018-2021) prepared for UPSC (2021-2026) up to interview not selected / want to persue career again /present passive income 21lpa (through properties and investments) both parents gazetted officers/ seeks central/state/psu officers/PG doctors/ highly placed private sector/soft ware employees caste language and location no bar 9505063063

PQM4 srlv grl, Nvr marrd, 85 Born 5'5".Curr Pursng Ph.D Avadh Univ & also wrkng. Upper caste & Dvrcc without a child invtd.9389349500,9793440260

MBBS, MD Ansthsiology Tata Kayastha Bride 22.7.87/5'2" Mumbai,D.dtls fel' Cardio & C care MRCP Part I & II. Pref. MD Dr, IT. Ph: 9821212409, E: sinhaassociates27@gmail.com

SEEKING alliance from upper caste for Bangalore based , beautiful girl 1995/5'6", M. Arch daughter of Army officer,mother, sister doctors.contact 9885186147

PQM4 37F5'6" hodophile gourmet fmily orientd Cls1offcr seeks WorkingProfsnl KindTallEductdCulturd groom BHP8928459886

EDUCATED established girl 33 working MNC Pune /Bangalore . Light earlier Vitiligo marks . Contact 6002986256

SM4 V. B'ful Kayastha girl 89/5'8" MA Eng, DU, MBA Premier Inst. Mumbai. VP in HSBC Bank in HO Mumbai. CTC 45 lac.Cont. 8080586600/ 7506941405

KAYASTHA, May 92 Non Manglik Girl, attractive 5'3", MA BEd teaching senior classes Diabetic. Reputed family contact : 9760812525

PQM4 Feb 95 born B'ful & Fair 5'3", Heavy, Sr UX researcher at MNC Bangalore (Pal kshatriya)lookng well stld IT sect boy 9106511718 /9428330317

COSMOPOLITAN

LONDON based Fair Smart Conv Edu 39/5'3" BE, MBA(LBS). Sr.Consultant top MNC. Highly edu fmly from Bihar/UP. email: spriyadarshee@gmail.com . Phone :+91 9445021180.

29 Years/ IT Consulting Professional/Christian (RC) open to both Christians and Hindus preferably from Chennai. You may contact: arokiyapaulin@gmail.com or 98414 03226 with your profile and also for receiving bride's profile.

BENGALI, 5'3"/1989, Assistant Professor of Economics in a renowned Atlanta college seeks alliance from liberal, educated men, settled in the US, preferably in Atlanta or nearby. +91 98314 37792

PG doctor, fair, April 1994, 5'4", Christian, BC, caste, religion no bar, seeks Doctor or any prof. qual. boy. contact 9444366088

SECOND MARRIAGE

SM4 Prof. qlfd, working as Proj. Mngr., Jain, Divorced girl, 42/160cm. E-matrijain14@gmail.com, Mob-8679660603 ,7983121603

BY LANGUAGE
BENGALI

SM4 Mumbai 1992 born 5'5" Slim fair B'ful Bengali Brahmin girl, Working in National Carrier (Airlines) at Delhi (Non Veg)Call: 9769885822

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Any action that leads to someone's death is not to be tolerated: Mann

▶ Continued from page 1

Mann said, "The district manager's suicide came to my notice. It is very sad, and we sympathise with his family. The reasons for the suicide are a matter of investigation. To ensure an impartial probe, we have asked the minister to resign... No one should be able to influence the probe."

"Any action that leads to someone's death is not to be tolerated. We did not enter politics or make parties for this purpose. No official should be pushed so much that he gives up his life," he said, and ordered chief secretary KAP Sinha to conduct a fair probe. "We will take appropriate action after that. As of now, I have taken the biggest possible action by asking the minister to resign. His portfolio will be given to someone else soon," said Mann.

Bhullar is AAP's MLA from Patti in Tarn Taran district. Randhawa had additional charge of Patti. This is not Bhullar's first time in the centre of a storm. In April 2024, he faced a backlash and was forced to apologise after allegedly making derogatory remarks against specific communities at a political rally in Patti.

Randhawa's family sought a CBI probe. His uncle, Amarjeet Singh, said the family had been under "immense stress". He alleged that Randhawa's family was scattered in different places after receiving threats that gangsters would abduct them and kill him if he did not comply.

"He was a good person. What we know is that he was assaulted and hit on the head. He could not bear this humiliation," he said. Opposition parties ripped into the AAP-led govt. SAD's Bikram Singh Majithia alleged that Randhawa was summoned to the minister's residence on March 13 and assaulted. "Bhullar forced Randhawa to record a video at gunpoint that he had taken a bribe. He was unable to bear this bullying and humiliation. There are several tender applications in the name of Bhullar's father."

HP CM presents ₹54,928cr budget for FY 2026-27

Sanjeev.Verma
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Shimla: Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday presented the state budget for the financial year 2026–27, with a total outlay of Rs 54,928 crore. The budget reflects a reduction of Rs 3,568 crore compared to the previous year, primarily due to the discontinuation of the revenue deficit grant (RDG) and the state's increasing debt burden.

Presenting his fourth budget—spanning 136 pages and delivered over four hours—Sukhu, who also holds the finance portfolio, criticised the central govt for halting the RDG.

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Important Dates

LAST DATE OF REGISTRATION HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO 29th MARCH, 2026

Date of opening of online applications and opening of Payment Link	2nd March, 2026
Date of closing of applications	29th March, 2026
Display of list of eligible applicants for Interaction	31st March, 2026
Physical Interaction (may include interviews, portfolio assessment, Statement of Purpose **at SPA Delhi**	**16th April, 2026 – 21st April, 2026**
Announcement of Result / Display of the Rank List	28th April, 2026
Seat Allotment and Various Rounds of Counseling	28th April, 2026 – 23rd May, 2026
SPECIAL ROUND of Counseling	03rd June, 2026 – 10th July, 2026
Display of Information regarding **SPOT ROUND** Counseling (if any)	20th July, 2026
Physical Document Verification (in person at allotted institutions) and Commencement of Classes.	as per dates displayed by the respective Institutions on their Websites

General Instructions

1. Application fee is ₹ 3,500/- (Non-refundable), for Indian Nationals. For reserved categories SC, ST, EWS and PwD categories, the application fee is ₹ 1,750/- (Non-refundable).
2. The Foreign Nationals/ NRI/ PIO/OCI seeking admission in any of the Postgraduate Courses shall apply separately through DASA 2026 portal.
3. Candidate can exercise **any number of choices based on eligibility for the course applied for in any of the Institutions.**
4. Admission to Post Graduate Degree Courses against Kashmiri Migrant Reserved Seats as per the rules over and above the total number of PG seats of the respective Institute.
5. 5% seats are reserved for persons with benchmark disabilities on horizontal basis. These shall be adjusted against the respective reservations for OG, SC, ST, EWS and OBC (NCL) Categories as per provision for PwD reservations, Government of India.
6. Institutions reserve the right to give admissions up to 10% of the intake as supernumerary seats.
7. GATE and CEED qualified candidates having valid Score Card shall be eligible for the scholarship.
8. All dates mentioned are subject to change.
9. Candidates in final year may submit marksheet / transcript/ grade sheet till the pre-final year. In such cases, all admissions shall be provisional subject to the fulfillment of the eligibility criteria after receiving the final result in the qualifying examination.
10. Sponsored candidates from Government organizations, quasi-Government organizations, PSUs should apply through proper channel and the Selection Criteria for such candidates MAY BE relaxed as decided by the Selection Committee considering the suitability of the candidate on case-to-case basis. Such candidates shall apply separately through the websites of respective Institutions.
11. For further details visit https://jaappg.admissions.nic.in/ and for any clarifications, contact: jaappg2026@spa.ac.in .

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Taxpayers are accordingly advised to see AIS, e-campaigns and SAKSHAM NUDGE messages related to unreported income or unsupported deductions / exemptions and review their ITR to correct if any income is not disclosed or unsupported claims have been made and file their updated ITR under section 139(8A)at specific rate. The time limit for filing an updated return is four years from the end of the relevant Assessment Year.
Key Features of an Updated Return:
• Purpose: To promote voluntary compliance and reduce litigation.
• Form: An updated return must be filed using Form ITR-U along with the applicable ITR form (ITR-1 To ITR-7) for the relevant assessment year.
• Additional Tax: Filing an ITR-U requires the payment of additional tax, which varies based on the timing of the filing.
• Restrictions: An Updated Return cannot be a return of loss, decrease the total tax liability, or result in increase of income tax refund.
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AY 2022-23	60% additional tax
AY 2021-22	70% additional tax

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Nations can now be weakened via cyber, economic warfare: Singh

Dehradun: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said the nature of conflict had changed sharply and nations could now be weakened not only through conventional war but also through economic, cyber, space and information warfare, reports **Kautilya Singh**.

Virtually addressing the Raising Day celebrations and Diamond Jubilee of Sainik School, Ghorakhal, he said, "Present-day warfare transcends borders, with national security encompassing economic, digital, energy and food security."

He said the changing nature of threats required not only a strong military but also alert and prepared citizens. Singh said every citizen had to remain vigilant and ready at all times. He stressed the need for a robust military backed by people capable of standing shoulder to shoulder to defend the country under any circumstances.

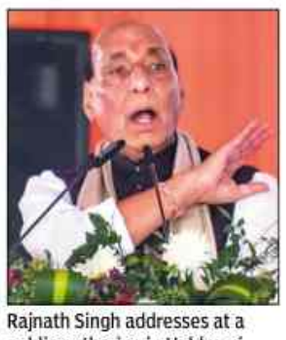
Singh said govt was leaving no stone unturned to equip the armed forces with advanced weapons and technologies and added that citizens, especially the youth, needed to build mental toughness and intellectual clarity through discipline and determination. He said these qualities would help the country respond to any challenge.

Calling admission of girls to Sainik Schools a historic decision, Singh said, "These girls will become the torchbearers of Nari Shakti."

If West Asia war worsens, it will hit all, says Rajnath

'Could Lead To An Energy And Fertiliser Crisis'

Kautilya.Singh
@timesofindia.com


Rajnath Singh addresses at a public gathering in Haldwani on Saturday

New Delhi: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said the continuing conflict in West Asia could lead to an energy and fertiliser crisis in the future and warned that no country, including India, could remain untouched if the situation worsened.

Addressing a public gathering in Haldwani to mark four years of Pushkar Dhami govt in Uttarakhand, he said dialogue and diplomacy were the only way to resolve such crises. He added that the continuous attacks in West Asia were a matter of concern not only for India but for the entire world.

Warning of the wider fallout of a prolonged conflict, Singh said, "No country in the world can remain unaffected. In this hour of crisis, India, too, could be impacted." At the same time, he credited PM Modi with ensuring that India had so far avoided getting trapped in such a crisis.

Singh appealed to people to support the govt's efforts on the global stage. "I want to appeal to everyone — the efforts being made by Modi ji to resolve the crisis... the people of Uttarakhand should also extend their support," he said.

He said India's position on international issues now carried greater weight than it did before 2014. "Earlier, when India spoke on international platforms, India's words were not taken with the seriousness they deserved. But today, the entire world listens to what India is saying," he said.

Govt: Adequate coal stocks to meet rising energy needs

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New Delhi: With India's coal production crossing the one-billion-tonne mark for the second year in a row, govt has said adequate stocks are being maintained at thermal power plants to meet rising energy demands.

India reached the one-billion-tonne coal production level on March 20. It had recorded its highest-ever coal production of 1,048 million tonnes in the 2024-25 financial year.

"This significant milestone underscores India's growing self-reliance in the energy sector and its commitment to ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply to key industries," the ministry of coal said in a statement.

The ministry added that enhanced and sustained coal production levels have enabled the country to effectively meet rising energy demands and allowed the power sector to maintain record stock levels at coal-based thermal power plants.

Earlier this month, govt recorded 200MT of coal production from commercial and captive coal mines.

While more than 53 MT of coal are available at thermal power plants — enough to meet demand for nearly 23 days at the current rate of consumption — pithead coal reserves at various captive and commercial mines are estimated at about 147 MT, besides stocks in transit, at ports and in storage.

According to the Central Electricity Authority, power demand this year is likely to touch 265-270GW — higher quantities of coal are required during the summer months as electricity demand surges due to increased use of ACs. Though the share of renewables has reached nearly 52%, coal-based thermal power continues to dominate India's electricity generation, with almost 250 GW of installed capacity.

Indian refiners eye Iranian oil stuck at sea as US eases curbs

Atul.Mathur@timesofindia.com

Photo For Representational Purposes

Indian refiners on Saturday said they would be keen to buy the crude, even as Tehran maintained that no surplus stocks existed

New Delhi: Following a temporary waiver issued by the US administration on sanctioned Iranian oil stranded at sea, Indian refiners on Saturday said they would be keen to buy the crude, even as Tehran maintained that no surplus stocks existed.

US treasury secretary Scott Bessent announced the waiver on Friday, saying that by temporarily unlocking this existing supply for the world, the US would bring approximately 140 million barrels of oil to global markets, expanding overall availability and helping relieve supply pressures. The authorisation is limited to cargoes already in transit and is valid only for a short window of a month.

"In essence, we will be using the Iranian barrels against Tehran to keep the price down as we continue Operation Epic Fury. This temporary, short-term authorisation is strictly limited to oil that is already in transit and does not allow new purchases or production," Bessent said.

Iran's oil ministry spokesperson Saman Ghodousi, however, contradicted the US statement, saying Washington was merely giving hope to buyers. "At present, Iran essentially has no crude oil left floating on water or surplus for supply in other international markets, and the statement by the US treasury secretary is merely aimed at giving hope to buyers and psychologically controlling the market," Ghodousi said in a statement in Persian on X.

The move comes amid supply disruptions in Hormuz, a key chokepoint that witnesses the movement of nearly a fifth of the global oil trade, and a surge in global oil prices. The US had earlier this month issued a similar temporary waiver on sanctioned Russian oil in transit to boost global supplies and keep crude prices in check, as benchmark prices have surged amid tightening supplies.

A senior official at a state-run refinery said India was trying to source oil from all possible avenues at a time when supplies have been disrupted due to the military conflict. "Teams across refiners are working hard to strike deals and procure oil and gas. The heavy and light grades of Iranian crude are quite compatible with our refineries. It will benefit all oil companies if we manage to secure some cargoes," the official said.

Sharp inflation in offing after assembly polls, alleges Rahul

New Delhi: Warning of sharp inflation in the coming weeks, Congress' **Rahul Gandhi** on Saturday said the Modi govt will hike the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG after the coming assembly elections, as he accused BJP of lacking strategy and direction to manage the country's economy. Congress also accused the Modi govt of "moral cowardice" and "betrayal of civilisational values" for its "failure to condemn" the US-Israel attack on Iran.

In a post on X, Rahul said the weakening of the rupee, which is "heading towards 100" against the dollar, and a sharp rise in industrial fuel prices are signs of looming inflation.

"Govt may call it 'normal', but the reality is: Production and transport will become more expensive, MSMEs will be hit the hardest, prices of everyday items will go up, and FII money will flow out even faster, putting more pressure on the stock market. In other words, it's certain to have a direct and deep impact on every family's pocket," he said.

Meanwhile, with the war in West Asia completing 21 days, Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said, "PM Modi has not been able to use his much-vaunted friendship with US President Trump and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to bring about a ceasefire."

He said, "Has the Modi govt condemned or criticised or deplored the brutal efforts of the US and Israel to force a regime change and state collapse that could lead to civil war in Iran? The answer is no." TNN

100 Gujarat villages turn to bio-CNG amid LPG crunch

Prashant.Rupera
@timesofindia.com

SAVING CYLINDERS

10 MT bio-CNG saves:		
Cylinders	Daily	Annual
Commercial (19.2 kg)	521	1,90,165
Domestic (14.2 kg)	715	2,60,975

Davol village in Borsad taluka where a bio-CNG cluster is being built

Vadodara: Amid LPG crisis and resultant black marketing that have left lakhs scrambling for cylinders, a ray of hope is emerging from the villages of Gujarat's Anand district, which are preparing an alternative and cleaner fuel sourced from cattle dung, food waste, and agricultural biomass.

A large-scale bio-CNG cluster of 10 plants spread across 100 villages promises not only a cheaper and more reliable alternative to LPG but also a step towards reducing India's dependence on imported energy.

Once operational, the cluster will produce 10MT of bio-CNG daily — equivalent to 521 commercial LPG cylinders or 715 domestic cylinders — ensuring uninterrupted supply for schools, hostels, temples, hotels, and highway eateries that are shut down for lack of LPG.

The project will be rolled out from Davol village in Borsad taluka and extend up to Pandoli in Petlad over a 31-km stretch. The cluster is expected to be commissioned by May, and will produce 10 tonnes of bio-CNG.

"This clean fuel will cost 20% less than LPG," said project developer Sanjay Patel, CEO of S P Ecofuel, which promotes innovative and low-cost renewable energy solutions. The entire cluster, including refining and distribution infrastructure, will involve an investment of around Rs 60 crore.

The initiative will source raw material from nearly 100 villages through women-led farmer producer organisations, processing 500MT of cattle dung, food waste, poultry waste, and agricultural biomass daily. The project will also help tackle rural waste, eliminate dumping and emissions, and create an additional income stream for farmers.

More airlines may cut flights as costs rise: Air India CEO

New Delhi: Air India CEO Campbell Wilson on Friday told employees the financial impact of the West Asia crisis is yet to be fully felt; most of the impact of rising oil prices will only be felt from next month, reports **Saurabh Sinha**.

He has cautioned that escalating operating costs may force more airlines to cut flights "depending on how fuel costs, airfares and customer demand move." The rupee touching new life lows on a daily basis adds to the dollar-denominated costs of airlines, including fuel for international flights of Indian carriers. On top of that, routes to and from the West have become much longer.

While airlines have introduced or hiked fuel surcharges, the CEO says, in his weekly message to the staff, "not every customer is willing to pay higher airfares, so there is a limit to how high we can price before demand drops. Additionally, given economic uncertainties, it is not certain that customers or companies will be as willing to travel as they were prior to the conflict and may choose to stay put for a while."

"There will be pockets of new demand, such as we're seeing on — and deploying additional flights to — some Europe and North America cities, but already airlines in some parts of the world are reducing some flights due to high fuel prices. Depending on how fuel costs, airfares and customer demand move, we may also have to adjust," he says.

"...Volatility in schedules and our network is extremely unfortunate for everyone, but it is done with the safety of our crew and customers as the overriding priority... I would especially like to acknowledge and send our well-being wishes to all Air Indians who are physically in the affected West Asia areas.

30% hotels, restaurants shut amid LPG woes: Trade bodies

▸ Continued from P 1

Govt said entities availing commercial LPG cylinders will have to register with oil marketing companies, detailing end use of the gas, and must also register for piped gas connections to be eligible for the additional allocation.

Hotel associations have estimated that nearly 30% of hotels and restaurants had to shut due to the shortage of LPG supplies, while many others reduced operating hours, cut down menus and restricted kitchen activity to conserve available stocks.

Though govt maintained on Saturday that LPG supply remained a matter of concern amid geopolitical conditions, the decision to increase commercial allocation suggests the overall situation may have improved slightly. Till Thursday, 13,700 new piped gas connections had been issued over nearly a fortnight, while more than 7,300 consumers shifted from LPG to PNG since the beginning of the week.

Following supply disruptions due to the military conflict in West Asia, govt had initially halted the sale of commercial cylinders and prioritised domestic LPG, besides ensuring supplies to hospitals and educational institutions. It later allowed 20% of the average monthly requirement for commercial and industrial users, leaving it to states to decide distribution priorities. On March 18, the ministry issued another order allowing an additional 10% allocation to states, subject to reforms and faster expansion of PNG infrastructure. Over 20 states and UTs have since issued orders to allocate non-domestic LPG in line with the guidelines.

India imports nearly half of its LPG requirement, with about 90% sourced from West Asia. Apart from a deal with the US, it is also tapping countries such as Russia, Japan and Norway for supplies.

In a letter to chief secretaries of states and Union territories, petroleum secretary Neeraj Mittal said all commercial and industrial LPG consumers must register with oil marketing companies to be eligible for allocation from the overall 50% quota. "OMCs shall register such customers and keep a record of the sector they operate in," Mittal said.

'A harrowing time but home at last', recalls ship crew member

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New Delhi: Till Feb 27, it seemed like a usual trip back home through familiar waters for the crew of the India-flagged ship. But everything changed dramatically, recalled a senior officer of the vessel — that returned to India early this week after crossing the conflict-hit Strait of Hormuz — as the US and Israel launched coordinated, surprise airstrikes against multiple sites across Iran the next day.

After loading the ship at Ras Laffan in Qatar on Feb 27, which is around 300–350 km (about 160–190 nautical miles) by sea, the captain and crew were all set to embark on their voyage to India. "But things came to a halt with reports and instances of major airstrikes. We took refuge at a safe anchorage at a port in the UAE. We faced a lot of problems as GPS started giving trouble and instruments on the ship were not working properly. This added to our anxiety levels...," the officer told **TOI** on condition of anonymity.

For the crew, apart from the risk they faced in the war zone, what added to their anxieties was the depleting stock of drinking water

For the crew, apart from the risk they faced in the war zone, what added to their anxieties was the depleting stock of drinking water. "We had enough food to manage for more than a month. But potable water was becoming an issue. Cargo ships can generate very little drinking water when stopped, and that's not enough to sustain crew members...We could have managed for another 7-10 days with the water we had," the officer said.

After an almost 10-day wait at the port, the crew got the good news on March 13 that they could start their journey that night. "We had no prior information...We were in touch with the Indian Navy, which escorted us after we crossed the Strait of Hormuz. We were not in contact with the Iranian Navy," the officer said.

W Asia war takes toll on highway builders as prices start to bite

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New Delhi: Highway builders are staring at a double whammy — hiked domestic commercial diesel price and costlier bitumen — due to the ongoing conflict in west Asia. While the price of commercial diesel has spiked by Rs 32 a litre in the past 20 days — from Rs 78 a litre to Rs 110 — since the war started, the cost of bitumen has gone up from Rs 4,750 to Rs 5,000 per tonne.

Senior executives of some of the highway construction companies told **TOI** that the increase has started impacting the road construction cost as bitumen and fuel expenses are around 30% of the project cost. "Since the commercial diesel price is revised from time to time, we are worried whether there will be another round of hike in the next fortnight since there is no sign of any end to the Iran-Israel-US war," said one of the executives.

He added that the discount offered prior to the war has been nullified on bitumen which was in the range of Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 per tonne.

Recently, the National Highway Builders Federation (NHBF) had flagged the issues at a meeting with NHAI. "Sharp escalation in fuel costs is impacting operation of plants at sites...We have no option but to seek govt intervention as the overall cost escalation due to these factors is beyond the normal contractual provisions," said a representative of NHBF.

Mantri meets kin of merchant navy captain

Ranchi: Junior minister for defence Sanjay Seth on Saturday visited the family of the deceased merchant navy captain Rakesh Ranjan Singh (47) in Ranchi, and assured them of help in bringing his body back to India.

Singh, a native of Biharsharif in Nalanda district of Bihar, died after suffering a heart attack on March 18 onboard the Panama-flagged crude oil vessel ASP Avana, stranded in the Persian Gulf since Feb 28 after Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz. Singh is survived by his wife and two sons, aged 20 and 16.

Seth told **TOI** that he spoke to his counterpart in the ministry of external affairs and also got in touch with the Indian consulate in Dubai. "Due to the Eid holidays in Dubai, things are getting delayed. Local police are conducting a probe and the postmortem report is awaited...we are doing all that is possible to bring his body back at the earliest," said Seth. TNN

CAPF bill earmarking IG to DG positions for IPS officers to be tabled in Parl soon

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Noting that IPS officers serving on deputation are an integral part of CAPFs, the bill's text underlines how CAPFs perform duties relating to national security and anti-insurgency in coordination with the state authorities

New Delhi: Citing the need to retain deputation of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers to the Central armed police forces (CAPFs) for operational efficiency through better Centre-state coordination, the home ministry is set to move a bill in Parliament earmarking a minimum 50% inspector-general (IG) level posts, 67% additional director general-level posts (ADG) and all director-general (DG) and special DG-level posts in CAPFs for deputation.

TOI was the first to report on March 11 that the Union cabinet had approved the draft CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026, which provides for continuing with the deputation of IPS officers to CAPFs.

The recruitment and service conditions of Group A General Duty officers and other officers/members of CAPFs are currently regulated by rules issued through an executive order. "In recent years, due to absence of an umbrella law, regulatory provisions have evolved in a fragmented manner, resulting in several litigation on service-related matters and leading to some functional and administrative difficulties....There is a need to lay down an umbrella law to regulate the recruitment, deputation, promotion and other conditions of services of Group A general duty officers and other officers...to ensure legislative clarity, preserving their distinct operational and functional requirements and harmonising judicial directions with administrative and federal requirements," it is underlined in the statement of objects and reasons of the bill.

The bill effectively blunts the Supreme Court order passed in May last year confirming 'organised services' (OGAS) status for group A CAPF officers for all purposes and directing the govt to progressively reduce deputation posts of IPS officers in the senior administrative grade (SAG) up to the rank of IG in CAPFs.

As per current recruitment rules for CAPFs, 20% of the posts at DIG level and 50% at the IG level are deputation posts for IPS officers.

The CAPF (General Administration) Bill does not retain the 20% deputation quota for DIG-level posts.

The May 2025 ruling by SC was seen as a potential career boost for around 13,000 CAPF cadre officers, who had been complaining of discrimination on account of IPS officers occupying the senior-level posts.

Noting that IPS officers serving on deputation are an integral part of CAPFs, the bill's text underlines how CAPFs perform duties relating to national security and anti-insurgency in coordination with the state authorities. "In the interest of maintaining Centre-state relations by ensuring close coordination between the Union and the states for effective operational functioning, it is essential to maintain the existing system of deputation of the IPS officers in CAPFs," it notes.

The statement of object and reasons further says that CAPFs are required to have a strict command control mechanism and functional hierarchy.

Divers to search reefs today for rally ace Hari

Chandigarh: The search and rescue operation for ace Indian rally driver Hari Singh, 59, continued for a second day on Friday with rescuers now confining their efforts to a section of coral reefs near Vaavu Atoll in the Maldives where the speedboat mishap occurred on Thursday, reports **Sukhmani Kooner**.

Specialised dive teams will look for them on Sunday.

Hari Singh's son, who had rushed to the Maldives to oversee the rescue efforts, is returning to India to be with his mother and sister. Singh's close friends have stayed back in the Maldives and are coordinating with Maldivian authorities and the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. Colleagues, friends and batchmates are in shock. Raj Kapoor, director of Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India, said Singh was exceptional, be it as a champion driver or his transition to his role in the JK Tyre Motorsport programme.

Ex-judges, diplomats flag bias in USCIRF religious freedom report

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The statement highlighted minority populations in India remained stable or have grown over decades, but there was decline in Hindus in Pakistan & Bangladesh since Partition

New Delhi: A group of 275 former judges, bureaucrats, diplomats and armed forces veterans has raised objections to a recent report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), calling it "disturbing" and lacking balance.

In a joint statement dated March 21, the signatories questioned the methodology and conclusions of the USCIRF report, arguing that assessments of religious freedom should be based on long-term demographic trends rather than "selective or episodic narratives."

Citing census data, the statement highlighted minority populations in India have remained stable or grown over decades, contrasting this with a decline in Hindu populations in Pakistan and Bangladesh since Partition.

According to the signatories, such trends "suggest the overall ecosystem in India has not produced the kind of sustained demographic contraction...that would indicate systemic persecution."

The group criticised what it described as a recurring tendency by USCIRF to portray Indian institutions and organisations such as the RSS negatively without sufficient macro-level evidence. It said criticism must be grounded in "verifiable evidence and contextual understanding."

The statement further objected to USCIRF's recommendations, including calls for sanctions and restrictions on individuals linked to the RSS, terming them "highly motivated" and lacking credibility.

The signatories include former SC judges, high court judges, ex-chief election commissioners, former ambassadors and over 130 retired armed forces officers.

Calling India a "robust democracy" with established judicial and parliamentary systems, the group urged the US govt to review the basis of the USCIRF report and also examine its contributors.

How Pak Paid Heaviest Terror Toll

Terror killed more people in Pakistan last year than anywhere else, with a dramatic jump in attacks carried out by outfits based in the country. India, still among the worst-hit globally, saw a drop in incidents, according to the latest **Global Terrorism Index** rankings by Australian think tank Institute for Economics and Peace, **Chethan Kumar** reports

The scene of a blast in Sept 2025 in Quetta in Pakistan's Balochistan province

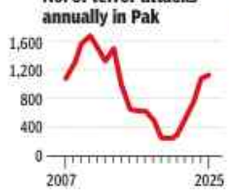
Getty Images

Pak's Gone From Bad To Worse

1,100+ Killed

In 2025, Pakistan replaced Burkina Faso as the country most affected by terrorism, recording 1,139 deaths and 1,045 incidents — its worst toll in over a decade

No. of terror attacks annually in Pak



6x Rise in terror incidents in 2025 over 2020. Pakistan has featured in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) top 10 in each of the past 12 editions

24% Jump in 2025 in attacks carried out by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which uses Afghan territory as a staging ground, sanctuary, and training base, and has launched a sustained campaign against Pakistani security forces and civilians

Terror Deepens Hold In Africa

6 of 10

Countries most affected by terrorism (see rankings table below) and accounting for over half of all global deaths are all located in sub-Saharan Africa

Burkina Faso, ranked No.1 in 2023 and 2024, recorded the largest absolute decrease in deaths, with fatalities falling 45% to 846

- But the paradox is that Burkina Faso is not necessarily becoming safer — it is becoming differently dangerous. Lethality per incident increased to 14.3 deaths per attack, as JNIM shifted tactics towards fewer but more intense strikes, primarily targeting security forces
- In Mali, JNIM spent 2025 attacking fuel convoys bound for capital Bamako, aiming to trigger economic disruption to destabilise the ruling junta

46% Jump

- In terror deaths in Nigeria, the largest increase in such fatalities. The country recorded 750 deaths, with Islamic State West Africa Province stepping up attacks, which rose from 20 in 2024 to 92 in 2025

467 Deaths

- In 35 attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which reached its worst-ever position on the index. That's an average of more than 13 deaths per attack, all attributed to IS-affiliated groups

An injured man being taken to a hospital in Nigeria's Maiduguri after blasts rocked the city earlier this week

Attacks Down In India

No.13 India's rank on the terror index. It is third in South Asia — behind Pakistan and Afghanistan — though it reports a broader downward trend over the past decade

43% Drop in the number of terrorist attacks compared to the previous year with deaths from terrorism also declining

Bangladesh and Nepal both recorded stronger improvements than India, with Bangladesh seeing a 100% fall in attacks and Nepal recording no terrorist incident for the third straight year in 2025

Lone Wolves Haunt West

280% Jump In deaths — from around 15 to around 57 — in terror attacks in Western democracies, including Australia's deadliest modern attack in which two jihadist extremists opened fire on a **Hanukkah gathering at Bondi Beach** on Dec 14, killing 15 and injuring over 40

93% Share of lone-actor attacks in fatal incidents in Western countries over the past five years. These included the vehicle attack in New Orleans, US, that killed 14 people and the assassination of political commentator Charlie Kirk

Children Caught In Terror Trap

42% Share of children and adolescents in terror-related investigations in Europe and North America in 2025, a three-fold increase over 2021

'Acceleration Gap' The growing mismatch between the speed of radicalisation of minors and the ability of states to respond, thanks mainly to algorithmic amplification on mainstream platforms, use of encrypted messaging apps, etc

97% Plots involving minors were foiled during 2022-25, compared to 68% for adult-only plots. Young people are being recruited, but they are also, for now, being intercepted

4 Outfits Behind 70% Of Deaths, But Terror Impact Declined

3,869 Killed In terror attacks in 2025 carried out by either Islamic State (IS, transnational), Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM, West Africa), TTP (Pakistan), or Al-Shabaab (Somalia)

28% Drop In terror deaths between 2024 and 2025, from 7,714 to 5,582, the lowest figure recorded since the index's baseline period

22% Drop In the number of attacks, to 2,944 incidents. Average lethality per attack fell from 2.1 to 1.8 deaths

81 Countries that improved their GTI scores — the highest since 2021. Only 19 saw a worsening, the lowest on record

Countries Hit Hardest By Terror

Africa and Asia account for all but one country in the latest ranking of those most affected by terror

Rank	No. of terror deaths, 2025	No. of attacks, 2025
Pakistan	1,139	1,045
Burkina Faso	846	59
Niger	703	88
Nigeria	750	171
Mali	341	106
Syria	156	243
Somalia	317	90
Congo, DRC	467	35
Colombia	213	442
Israel	5	9

Source: Global Terrorism Index, by Institute for Economics and Peace

B'desh PM expresses hope for strengthening bonds

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Tarique Rahman indulged in some Eid diplomacy this week with Rahman expressing hope in a letter to Modi on Friday that this blessed occasion would further strengthen the longstanding bonds of friendship and people-to-people ties between the two countries.

EID DIPLOMACY

Rahman told Modi that Eid-ul-Fitr is a cherished occasion that reminds all of the enduring values of compassion, solidarity, and harmony.

"It unites communities in a spirit of celebration, sharing, and generosity. I join Your Excellency in wishing that this blessed occasion will bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to our peoples and to communities across the world," said Rahman. The letter followed Modi's greetings to Rahman and the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of Eid.

Rahman had earlier written to Modi outlining his vision for the India-Bangladesh relationship and indicating that Dhaka is ready to move forward without being inhibited by the past. Rahman, who was voted to office with a landslide majority, made three important points in that letter dated Feb 26.

First, underlining the "historic and long-standing" ties between the two countries, Rahman said Bangladesh attached high importance to its ties with India shaped by shared history, culture and geography. According to Rahman, the people of India and Bangladesh share considerable commonality and enjoy deep-rooted ties.

Second, as Rahman said, is the need for both countries to address issues in ways that would result in gains for the common people. He said in the letter that by doing this there's a lot both countries can accomplish in terms of their shared interests. Rahman said Dhaka looked forward to advancing ties based on dignity, equality, mutual trust and respect, and also "benefit-sharing".

Third, and in a more personal outreach to Modi, Rahman said in his letter, which was delivered within weeks of his oath-taking, that he's mindful of the Indian PM's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047.

Rahman said the leaders can – and need to – reinvigorate cooperative engagements to secure peace, harmony, stability and prosperity "for all people in the longest time". The mention of Viksit Bharat is significant as the Indian govt turns that vision into a core foreign policy theme with initiatives aimed at strengthening development partnerships with friendly countries, in line with India's strategic interests.

BLO commits suicide in Kasaragod

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kasaragod: A schoolteacher who was also working as a booth level officer (BLO) jumped into a river at Mogral in the district and drowned on Saturday, police said. The deceased, Muhammed Savad B, 32, was from Puthur and worked as a teacher at Govt Higher Secondary School in Cherkala, police said. He was the BLO of booth number 1 at GHSS Mogral Puthur's new building.

Following the incident, his relatives and locals protested alleging that work pressure related to Savad's BLO duties was the reason behind his death. Arjun Pandyan, district collector, said Savad's service as BLO was excellent and his death has no link with the duty. Police recovered a suicide note citing personal matters as the reason for him taking the extreme measure.

3-yr-old falls to death from 12th-floor

Noida: A three-year-old child died after falling from the 12th-floor balcony of 7th Avenue Society in Gaur City in Greater Noida West on Friday evening reports **Advitya Bahl**. According to officials, the child suffered critical injuries after falling from the balcony and was rushed to a nearby private hospital, where he succumbed during treatment.

Police said the child was alone at home at the time. His mother had briefly stepped out to drop off another child to a tuition class. During that time, the toddler is believed to have woken up, walked into the balcony and accidentally toppled over the railing. Residents alerted the family after hearing screams, and police reached the spot soon after being informed by the hospital.

The body has been sent for autopsy as part of a routine legal procedure. Police said there was no indication of foul play, and the case appeared to be an accidental fall.

सीएसआईआर-केंद्रीय विद्युतरसायन अनुसंधान संस्थान
CSIR-CENTRAL ELECTROCHEMICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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Notification No. JRF - 02/2026
Engagement of CSIR – JRF (GATE)
Applications are invited from suitable bonafide Indian citizens for the position of CSIR - JRF(GATE) fellows under 'CSIR's Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) GATE scheme' tenable at CSIR- CECRI, Karaikudi for pursuing Integrated Dual Degree PhD Programme (M. Tech – Ph.D.) of AcSIR.

No. of. Vacancies	Reservation	Date of Interview
05	UR- 02, OBC- 02 & SC- 01	10.04.2026

Date of Commencement of ONLINE application: 22.03.2026 (10.00 A.M.)
Last Date for submission of ONLINE application: 07.04.2026 (05.00 P.M.)
For complete details and application, please visit the opportunity page of CECRI website (www.cecri.res.in)
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Institute of Hotel Management, Catering & Nutrition
(An Autonomous Body Under Ministry of Tourism, GOI)
Pusa, New Delhi-110012
Website : www.ihmpusa.net, Email : ihm.pusa@gov.in, Contact No. 011-25841411
VACANCY
Applications are invited from the eligible Indian citizens for the following post on direct recruitment basis :
Name of the Post : Principal - 01 Post UR (Unreserved)
Pay Scale : Pay Level 13 (Rs. 1,23,100-2,15,900) as per 7th CPC Matrix (Group 'A')
Age Limit : Not exceeding 53 years as on 01st Aug. 2026.
The detailed information (Educational Qualification, Experience, Application Format etc.) is available at www.ihmpusa.net The last date of receiving the complete applications at the Institute is 30-04-2026 till 04:00 PM. Any corrigendum/addendum etc. to this advertisement will be issued only on the institute's website. Applicants are advised to visit the institute website regularly for any updates/important information.
Sd/-
Principal/Secretary

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru
NOTICE
1. Aggregate Amount: Total Rs.10,000 crore 1. Rs.2,000 crore - 05-year tenure. 2. Rs.2,000 crore - 08-year tenure. 3. Rs.2,000 crore - 10-year 6-Month tenure. 4. Rs.2,000 crore - 11-year 6-Month tenure. 5. Rs.2,000 crore - 15-year tenure.
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
3. Date of auction : March 24, 2026
Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website www.rbi.org.in.
Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department
DIPR/CP/6365/Zen/2025-26

120 tourists stranded in Sandakphu rescued

Roshan.Gupta
@timesofindia.com

Darjeeling: Around 120 tourists stranded near Sandakphu, Bengal's highest point in Darjeeling, after night-long heavy snowfall were rescued on Saturday by Singalila Land Rovers Owners' Association (SLROA). Authorities have temporarily shut access to Sandakphu and redirected all visitors to Tumling in Nepal's Ilam district.

Sandakphu was draped in nearly one foot of fresh snow on Saturday morning as it witnessed the season's longest spell — from 10pm on Friday to 11 am on Saturday.

"This time, the intensity was much higher. Our teams immediately began clearing routes and rescuing stranded tourists. The first group was brought down safely by 3pm, and operations are ongoing," SLROA president Chandan Pradhan said. "Vehicles from Sandakphu are now returning. The Thakum route remains inaccessible due to snowfall and is expected to stay blocked for at least two more days," he added.

Cop wears jeans to meeting, suspended

Bhopal: Three policemen were suspended by MP's Shahdol range inspector general of police after they failed to submit mandatory reports on time, with a dress code violation also cited against one of them who appeared in jeans when summoned by the IG for an explanation reports **Amarjeet Singh**.

IG Chaitra N summoned the personnel after it emerged that crucial information regarding inspections and meetings conducted by DSPs was not submitted by the cops from Shahdol, Umaria and Anuppur districts, despite repeated reviews.

Taking serious view of the lapse, the IG summoned the personnel concerned on March 16 for an explanation. During the proceedings, a head constable appeared before the senior officer wearing jeans instead of the uniform, an act that was flagged as indiscipline and recorded in the suspension order alongside the primary charge of negligence.

An ASI and a head constable from Shahdol and Umaria were suspended, officials said.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
No. JHS/Comm/e-Auction/26/144 Date: 19.03.2026
E-Auction Notice
On Behalf of The President Of India, The Divisional Railway Manager, (Commercial) Jhansi invites e-auction as per categories given as under:-
Category: Parcel | Catalogue No.: JHS-LEASING-60
Asset Details: 01- Train number 12198 = 02 SLR-F-I & F-II, 02- Train number 12049 = 01 SLR-F-I, 03- Train number 12279 = 01 SLR-F-I, 04- Train number 22198 = 01 SLR-F-I, 05- Train number 22195 = 01 SLR-F-I, 06- Train number 11107 = 02 SLR-R-I & F-I, 07- Train number 22547 = 01 SLR-F-I, 08- Train number 11086 = 02 SLR-R-I & F-I.
Auction Start: 01.04.2026 at 11:00 hrs
Auction End: 01.04.2026 at 13:10 hrs
Note: Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction Leasing module on IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in). The Lot-wise details are available therein under the above mentioned Catalogue Number. 627/26 (ADM)
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Admission to MS-R program is conducted by the Institute. Selected candidates will receive scholarship sponsored by Goverment of India.
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शुद्धिपत्र/CORRIGENDUM
यह सूचना लॉजिस्टिक्स कर्मियों की भर्ती हेतु प्रकाशित विज्ञापन (46वें भारतीय अंटार्कटिक अभियान, 2026–2028) के संदर्भ में है। निम्नलिखित संशोधन किए जाएं:
This is with reference to the advertisement published for recruitment of Logistics Personnel for the 46th Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica (ISEA) for the season 2026–2028. The following corrections may please be noted:
1. पृष्ठ संख्या 3
हिंदी संस्करण में *योग्यता एवं अनुभव* के अंतर्गत CRO (क्रेन ऑपरेटर) का क्रमांक गलत रूप से 4 अंकित है। सही क्रमांक 6 होगा।
Page No. 3
In the Hindi version under *Qualification and Experience*, the Sr. No. for **CRO (Crane Operator)** has been incorrectly mentioned as **4**. The correct Sr. No. should be **6**.
2. पृष्ठ संख्या 4
निम्नलिखित पदों का क्रम आपस में परिवर्तित है:
क्रमांक 13 – ROP (रेडियो/वायरलेस ऑपरेटर) तथा क्रमांक 14 – ISA (इन्वेंटरी एवं स्टोर्स सहायक)
सही क्रम इस प्रकार होगा:
क्रमांक 13 – ISA (इन्वेंटरी एवं स्टोर्स सहायक) तथा क्रमांक 14 – ROP (रेडियो/वायरलेस ऑपरेटर)
Page No. 4
The positions listed as:
Sr. No. 13 – ROP (Radio/Wireless Operator) and **Sr. No. 14 – ISA (Inventory & Stores Assistant)** stand interchanged.
The correct order should be:
Sr. No. 13 – ISA (Inventory & Stores Assistant) and **Sr. No. 14 – ROP (Radio/Wireless Operator)**
अन्य सभी विवरण यथावत रहेंगे। यह शुद्धिपत्र मूल विज्ञापन के साथ पढ़ा जाए, जो एनसीपीओआर की वेबसाइट www.ncpor.res.in पर उपलब्ध है।
All other contents of the advertisement remain unchanged. This corrigendum may be read in conjunction with the original advertisement available on the NCPOR website www.ncpor.res.in
Advt No:NCPOR/2026/03
For & on behalf of Director, NCPOR

Amendments a serious setback for transgenders

BY INVITATION

JAYNA KOTHARI

STRIPPED AGAIN? Around 30,000 transgenders have obtained identity cards. Can legal recognition once given be taken away?

The new amendments proposed to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, which came out of nowhere on March 12, are like a knife twisting into the heart of the trans community.

The central claim for transgender rights has always been gender self-determination. The Supreme Court, in its seminal judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (NALSA) in 2014, held that all persons have the fundamental right and autonomy to self-determine their gender identity as male, female, or transgender. It held that one's gender would not be decided on the basis of their biological attributes or any gender-affirming surgery but based on self-determination. It also guaranteed equality to trans persons and held that any discrimination on the basis of gender identity would amount to discrimination on the basis of sex. With this, India became one of the pioneering countries in the world to have recognised the right to gender identity.

The NALSA judgment was followed by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019, which also recognised the right to self-determination of gender identity. Most importantly, the Act broadened the definition of transgender persons to mean: "A person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes transman or transwoman (whether or not such person has undergone sex reassignment surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other therapy), person with intersex variations, genderqueer and person having such socio-cultural identities as kinner, hijra, aravani and jogta." Recently, in 2025, the Supreme Court in the landmark Jane Kaushik case recognised that the Transgender Persons Act was not being implemented effectively, and set up an advisory committee to review its working and to recommend improvements.

While our constitutional courts have been recognising and expanding the rights of transgender persons, the recent Bill attempts to rip out the very soul of the law. The proposed definition of 'transgender' persons is restrictive, exclusionary and offensive in its use of stigmatising words like 'eunuch'. It also removes an entire class that self-identifies as transgender persons, transmen, transwomen or gender queer, and replaces it with a narrow definition based solely on a medical or biological model. The reasons for these amendments in the statement of objects and reasons state that "The legislative policy was and is intended to protect only those who face severe social exclusion due to biological reasons for no fault of their own and no choice of their own…The purpose was and is not to protect each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived sex/gender identities or gender fluidities…"

With this statement, the proposed Bill nullifies more than a decade of settled jurisprudence of the constitutional right to self-determination of one's gender identity. From being stripped naked before doctors and welfare boards to confirm that they are indeed transgender so that they can claim measly pensions, the transgender community moved the courts to recognise their right to self-determine their gender identity. This was held by the Supreme Court to be one of the most intimate and personal choices that every person is entitled to.

When this is replaced by a law that seeks only to cover certain transgender persons from socio-cultural communities and excludes all others who identify themselves as trans or genderqueer, we are invisibilising an entire community and saying that they have no recognition under law. It is only with the legal recognition of their gender identity that many civil rights would be available to trans persons such as the right to claim a legal identity through a passport or Aadhaar, the right to access food through a ration card, a driver's license, the right to education and reservation in public employment. Our laws cannot begin with a focus on misuse and fraud on the part of the beneficiaries and must enable people of all genders to access their legal rights equally.

Over the last few years, around 30,000 persons have obtained transgender identity cards. What happens to them and their legally recognised gender identity? Can legal recognition once given be taken away? The heart of the law is the principle of self-determination of gender identity and the freedom to each person to be who they want to be and to be treated equally. This cannot be taken away by an amendment. ■

Kothari is a senior Supreme Court advocate and author of 'Transforming Rights: How the Law Shapes Transgender Lives, Identity and Community in India'

Meaningful and lasting political change in Iran can only come from within society

Iranian photographer and filmmaker ***Azadeh Akhlaghi*** *is known for reconstructing pivotal political assassinations and deaths in Iran's modern history that were never photographed. Akhlaghi, who has also worked as assistant director to acclaimed filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, speaks to* ***Sneha Bhura*** *about her work and the uncertainties surrounding Iran's future*

FOR THE RECORD

■ You have recreated unphotographed assassinations such as the shooting of a young philosophy student, Neda Agha-Soltan, who later became an icon for protestors. How does Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's assassination echo those past turning points in history?

My artistic practice focuses on suspicious deaths or assassinations that took place when the camera was not available to capture the event. To reconstruct those moments, I conduct thorough investigations, studying documents and eyewitness accounts. The details surrounding Khamenei's assassination remain vague and unclear. So far, there is only satellite imagery showing that the building was completely destroyed, but there are no images of his body. According to some reports, a video of his body exists and was shown to (US president) Donald Trump and (Israeli PM) Benjamin Netanyahu, but the Iranian public has not been allowed to see it. Many Iranians consider Khamenei to have been responsible for decades of imprisonment, violence, and suppression over the past 37 years. In my opinion, he should have been captured and brought to court in Iran to answer for that history. If the alleged video is not made public, I might consider reconstructing the moment of his death as a historical turning point. At the same time, this situation demonstrates how, despite living in an age of cameras and social media, crucial evidence can still be censored or withheld from the public.

■ What do you make of the US assuming it could engineer regime change through airstrikes?

Iranian society has a very long and complex history of internal struggles for freedom and political reform. For more than a century—from the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 to later uprisings and movements—Iranians themselves have been the driving force behind attempts to reshape their political system. Change in Iran has always emerged from internal social movements, intellectual debates, and political struggles. The experiences of neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria have shown how external military action can lead to long periods of instability or even civil war. Ultimately, meaningful and lasting political change in Iran can only come from within Iranian society itself, through the continued efforts and sacrifices of its people.

■ You live in New York now, but what are you hearing from your friends and family in Iran? How are people coping with the bombardment?

The internet has been cut off since the beginning of the war, so I have absolutely no news from most of my family and relatives. Only a very small number of people have been able to access the internet through VPNs, which are being sold at very high prices on the black market. The media, both international and state-controlled, does not provide a clear picture of what is actually happening inside the country. There are almost no mobile phone images circulating on social media, which would normally provide eyewitness testimonies. I managed to speak briefly with a few friends. They told me that people have become used to sleeping with their shoes on, under door frames, and away from windows. There are no air raid shelters or sirens, so people have nowhere to take refuge when the strikes begin. Another friend wrote that he still goes jogging every day in a park near his home because staying inside has become unbearable. Many of them are suffering from sleep disorders. I worry about my father, brothers, and friends. I think about my 14-year-old cousin who must undergo chemotherapy this week, even as hospitals and healthcare facilities are being hit during the attacks. Saturday was the Iranian New Year, Nowruz, marking the beginning of spring. I cannot imagine my people celebrating the New Year under such horrific bombardment. In just two weeks, more than three million have lost their homes. I left Iran two years ago for New York and have not been back since. I cannot imagine returning to Iran and seeing the places I once loved—the cafés, galleries, parks, and neighbourhoods—destroyed.

■ What future do you hope for Iran after this war?

I truly have no idea what will happen. Iran has been trapped in a vicious cycle for more than a century. Each time people overthrow a dictator, another system of repression replaces the previous one. What I fear—and what often appears in my nightmares—is the possibility of a civil war. There is also the danger that the country could be left with the same authoritarian system—one that only two months ago violently suppressed protests in the streets and imprisoned tens of thousands of people. In that case, many of the social achievements and movements that Iranians have built over the past decades could be lost. At the same time, the Iranian people have already suffered under sanctions for many years. A prolonged conflict could push the country into an even deeper humanitarian and economic crisis. Having worked extensively on the modern history of Iran, I feel that we have rarely experienced days as terrifying and uncertain as the ones we are living through now.

■ What about the ethics of re-enacting traumatic history and placing yourself in those scenes?

By re-enacting traumatic historical moments, I try to visualise the past for my audience so they can have a clearer understanding of it. But it is ultimately impossible to reconstruct history in a completely objective way. Though I try to find as many documents and eyewitness accounts as possible, I know that I will never be able to discover the whole truth. History is full of layers of uncertainty and ambiguity. That is why I titled my previous project 'By an Eye-Witness'. It reflects the idea that what I present is my own encounter with history.

Big exit at HDFC Bank raises even bigger questions about corporate governance

BY INVITATION

LLOYD MATHIAS

The sudden resignation of Atanu Chakraborty as non-executive chairman and independent director of HDFC Bank is not just another boardroom development. It is a moment that compels India Inc. to pause and reflect.

In a country where board exits are typically cloaked in polite euphemisms — "personal reasons" or "other commitments" — this resignation stands apart. In his letter, Chakraborty pointedly refers to "certain happenings and practices within the bank over the past two years" that are "not in congruence with my personal values and ethics". That single line has done what few corporate disclosures in India ever do: it has raised more questions than it answers.

To understand why this matters, one must first appreciate the scale and stature of HDFC Bank. It is not merely India's largest private sector bank; it is widely seen as the gold standard of governance, prudence, and execution. It commands what investors often call a 'trust premium'—a valuation built not just on performance, but on credibility.

When the non-executive chairman of such an institution flags ethical concerns — even obliquely — the ripple effects are systemic. The issue extends far beyond one company's boardroom, it touches confidence in India's financial architecture.

The timing adds to the gravity. The bank is still digesting its transformational merger with HDFC Ltd., a process that inevitably strains systems, culture, and governance frameworks. If there are fault lines, this is when they would surface.

Chakraborty's statement signals rare moral discomfort—arguably commendable in a corporate environment where dissent is often muted. Yet the absence of specifics creates a vacuum quickly filled by speculation. This raises an uncomfortable question: what is the responsibility of an independent director or chairman when they believe something is wrong? If the concerns warranted resignation, they warranted clarity. Ambiguity at the highest levels erodes trust. By neither fully disclosing the issue nor remaining silent, the resignation risks achieving the worst of both worlds: reputational damage without accountability. It also brings into sharp focus the evolving role of independent directors in India. For decades, Indian boards have been criticised — often rightly — for being passive, even compliant. Independent directors were expected to lend credibility but not necessarily to challenge management in a meaningful way. That is changing.

Globally and in India, there is growing recognition that independent directors are not ornamental, they are fiduciaries. Their duty is not to management, but to shareholders and, in the case of systemically important institutions, to the broader economy. Their role is not merely to dissent, but to ensure that dissent is recorded, debated, and, where necessary, escalated. Resignation should be the last resort, not the first visible action.

The swift response from the Reserve Bank of India has sought to calm markets, noting that there are no material concerns regarding the bank's governance and that its financial position remains sound. But regulatory reassurance, while necessary, cannot substitute for transparency. Markets are driven as much by perception as by fact — and perception is shaped by what is said, and what is left unsaid. Stepping down from the board of an important institution is not a decision to be taken lightly. This is not akin to exiting a promoter-led enterprise where disagreements may be personal; here, the stakes are far higher.

And yet, there is another way to read this. Perhaps this is the beginning of a shift in which independent directors are no longer willing to lend their names to decisions they do not believe in. Perhaps it signals a future where boardrooms are more contested, more accountable, and ultimately more transparent. If so, that would be a welcome change.

The episode underscores the urgent need for clearer norms around board conduct and exits in India. First, there must be greater transparency. When senior board members resign citing governance concerns, there should be a structured mechanism—either through the regulator or through mandatory disclosures—that ensures clarity without compromising confidentiality. Second, regulators may need to examine whether existing frameworks adequately capture the responsibilities of independent directors at the point of exit. Silence and ambiguity should not become the default.

Third, boards themselves must introspect. Governance is not just about compliance; it is about culture. If a chairman feels compelled to resign on ethical grounds, it is a signal that deserves serious reflection—irrespective of whether the concerns are ultimately validated.

Finally, there may be a case for a formal review or inquiry—not as a presumption of wrongdoing, but as a means to restore credibility. In institutions of systemic importance, perception is reality.

Corporate India often moves on quickly from uncomfortable moments. This should not be one of them. In the end, the real question is not why one chairman chose to leave. It is whether Corporate India will choose to learn. ■

Mathias is a business strategist and an independent director

Iran shock hits fertilizer supply. But the answer may be up in the air

SWAMINOMICS

SWAMINATHAN S ANKLESARIA AIYAR

EYE ON SKY & SOIL: Air-extracted fertilizers can counter high subsidies and help improve soil quality

The war on Iran has not just interrupted supplies of cooking gas and crude but also fertilizers and raw materials (mainly liquefied natural gas) for manufacturing fertilizers in India. Agricultural experts are now demanding major projects for improving fertilizer self-sufficiency, entailing huge capital outlays that will take decades to implement.

Yet, an intriguing, underexplored possibility lies much closer to home. India suffers from terrible air pollution, with high emissions of nitrogen and sulphur contributing to the muck. This is a major health threat. Particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM2.5) causes fatal heart and respiratory diseases.

Few people have noted that the nitrogen and sulphur in India's air are also the raw materials for manufacturing fertilizers. These combine in polluted air to produce ammonium sulphate and ammonium nitrate, two valuable fertilizers. Why not just extract these fertilizers out of thin air (oops, I mean polluted air), reducing health hazards even while making India a massive fertilizer producer?

Does that sound too good to be true? A study by Manojkumar N and Rosa Gierens of the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) reveals that secondary particles contribute roughly one-third of India's PM2.5 pollution. These particles are not directly emitted but formed through atmospheric reactions involving sulphur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and ammonia (NH_3). The result is the formation of ammonium salts.

CREA finds that ammonium sulphate alone accounts for about 34% of PM2.5 mass on average across India. The combined concentration of ammonium sulphate and ammonium nitrate could be 50%. This is a remarkable statistic because ammonium sulphate and ammonium nitrate are the most widely used fertilizers, supplying essential nitrogen and sulphur to crops. CREA finds that 43 cities have ammonium sulphate concentrations of 31-35% of total PM2.5; another 58 cities are in the 36-40% range; and 9 major cities have concentrations exceeding 40%. Four of the five worst cities have coal-based industries — Korba (43.1%), Bhilai (42.5%), Anpara (42.3%), and Raipur (42.1%). The five cities with the lowest concentrations are Jodhpur (20.5%), Srinagar (23.5%), Rajkot (23.8%), Ahmedabad (25.9%), and Jammu (26%).

A two-stage process will probably be required. First, coarser particles above PM2.5 will have to be filtered out using industrial filtration systems. The second stage will filter out the remaining PM2.5 particles to yield a solid rich in nutrients. Unlike conventional fertilizer production, which depends on energy-intensive chemical processes and imported LNG, this new approach uses simple physical filtration technologies such as high-efficiency filters or electrostatic precipitators. The residue will be diluted fertilizer, but so what? It will be very cheap so farmers can use more of it.

Indeed, air-extracted fertilizers can finally make possible what has long been politically impossible — the dismantling of the current high-subsidy regime that imposes huge costs on the govt while encouraging farmers to grossly over-use urea, the most-subsidised fertilizer. Farmers' focus on urea has meant using excessive nitrogenous fertilizer at the cost of phosphoric and potassic fertilizers essential for soil health. Thus, the subsidy is steadily ruining the quality of India's soil. Cheap, air-extracted fertilizers can help end the current subsidy regime.

A compelling aspect of air extraction is its decentralised nature. Instead of large fertilizer plants dependent on global supply chains and imported equipment and raw materials, modest filtration units can be deployed across all districts, especially pollution hotspots. These units can continuously extract fertilizers for local use. This will reduce transportation costs, lower transport emissions, and harness urban pollution to support rural agriculture. The CREA report shows that secondary particles are highly mobile and travel across regions. This means the 'fertilizer resource' in polluted air is not confined to industrial zones but is widely distributed across India. Astonishingly, nobody has ever looked to tap this hidden fertilizer potential.

Various challenges will arise. Ammonium sulphate and nitrate are suitable for alkaline soils but not acidic soils, so some chemical processing may be needed for the latter. Polluted air may contain heavy metals and other toxins, and these will have to be removed by careful filtration. Also, one may need huge volumes of air to collect a meaningful amount of fertilizer.

But wild as it sounds, it's an idea worth exploring through pilot projects across the country. Once the attendant problems are identified and sorted out, filtration can become a national project of the highest priority. Imagine, we can hugely reduce heart and lung disease, reduce our dependence on imported fertilizers, and end the crippling fertilizer subsidy, all in one go. What are we waiting for? ■

Nora Fatehi song: Content creators can't hide behind the fig leaf of free speech

BY INVITATION

NEELESH MISRA

It's quite simple, really.

When lyricists and singers celebrate alcohol and drugs in their songs, young, intoxicated people at parties are encouraged to consume more alcohol and normalise drugs. And let me tell you that alcohol also causes cancer and erectile dysfunction.

When filmmakers show songs with raunchy lyrics and double meanings, objectifying women, they are used by young men to taunt and sexually harass women in the real world. They nurture behaviour that makes you degrade women and see them as objects — and can lead to violent crimes.

When abusive language or unthinkable, grisly violence becomes the norm on OTT apps, the baddie behaviour becomes cool in everyday life as well.

Content is a very powerful tool, whose power has not been entirely understood. It rewires our brain for better or worse and affects our lives in deep, invisible ways. And for a very large number of creators, reckless and negative content is a neat shortcut in the name of freedom of expression.

A few years ago, we were in the preparatory workshop for an OTT series that would become one of the biggest ever in India. It would be my first stint as an actor — the role was that of a politician, one of the three most prominent roles for the show, a political drama.

I was grumbling to the main protagonist, an excellent actor known for her feisty roles, about the abundance of cuss words in the script despite having specifically told the creative team that hired me that my only condition was: "Gaali nahin doonga" (I won't use abusive language).

She leaned over and replied: "You can't escape it. When scriptwriters don't know what else to write, they fill the script with cuss words."

By late night on the first day, I politely and respectfully left the OTT show.

You take shortcuts when you are not creatively good enough. You take shortcuts when you cannot write powerful dialogues or great scenes or evocative poetry. You mindlessly celebrate sex and alcohol, drugs and violence, because they offer easy titillation.

Badshah knows this. Honey Singh knows this. Raqueeb Alam, Mangli, Prem, Arjun Janya, and Nora Fatehi — makers of the recent (now-banned) song 'Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke' that graphically described sexual acts, they all know this.

The release of this kind of song would have been unimaginable even five years ago. How did we get here? Creators either do not know the power and impact of their work on people's everyday lives — or just do not care about it. When you write a sexual song objectifying a woman in the name of freedom of speech, you empower offences against women. When you create uplifting content, it improves lives, raises dopamine levels.

It's not rocket science.

Ask parents.

Ask viewers.

Ask scientists.

NOT COOL: When filmmakers objectify women, it has consequences in the real world

There is abundant scientific research to show that what we watch on-screen has a direct impact on our beliefs and actions off-screen. Watching violence on the screen increases the probability of violent and aggressive behaviour in the immediate and long-term spans. There is a direct linkage between exposure to lyrics describing degrading sex and early sexual experiences among adolescents.

But a large number of creators have zero sense of their social responsibility. In the absence of adequate govt controls on obscene digital content and algorithms, it is very easy to put out virtually any kind of creative content with absolutely any kind of messaging and have it travel through the internet to virality at the speed of light.

Remember the crass YouTube episode featuring Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia which featured unthinkable statements around a participant's parents' intimacy? A group of men and women having an adult conversation in a room – who could object to that? But it was shot, and clips with the most obscene parts were released on the wider social media where anyone could watch them, and they did — including children and teenagers, and they still can access that content which was then repurposed by other creators. The internet never forgets.

Irony died a painful death recently when the Delhi Police and the narcotics department collaborated with Honey Singh to put out a message against drugs. "If our youth is healthy, our country shall march on," he said. In the past, the same artiste has been known to include messaging normalising and glorifying the intoxication culture, and the consumption of alcohol and even drugs.

Badshah, his contemporary and rival, recently faced legal trouble for a song that allegedly promoted drug use. And his discography includes several songs that celebrate 'party culture' — an allusion to reckless social behaviour and alcohol consumption.

But such content keeps getting churned out, brazenly. And it keeps getting justified through arguments around the freedom of expression.

This debate is not new, of course. Fifteen years ago, in a TV discussion over the song 'Bhaag DK Bose' in the film 'Delhi Belly' iconic Hindi writer, the late Rajendra Yadav, vehemently opposed my argument against the song. He said, "You people don't want the language of the poor, the language of the street, to come into your drawing rooms." With respect, that is an indefensible defence of abusive language which should not be in any street or home, poor or not.

Creating decent, purposeful, entertaining content is hard work, a lonesome journey and creates a lasting impact. Creating crass sexual or violent content comes easy and is forgotten easily.

Creators can choose how they want to be remembered. Audiences can choose what kind of content they want for vulnerable minds around them. Lawmakers and authorities must remember that a creator's freedom ends where the audience's nose begins. ■

Misra is a lyricist and storyteller

Reels, rotis and rise of the desi tradwives

The western phenomenon is now getting a local twist as bahu influencers turn their chai-and-chulha routines into aspirational and monetised content

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Last Aug, the Cambridge Dictionary did what Instagram had already been doing with gusto. It formalised 'tradwife'. The word — a tidy portmanteau of 'traditional' and 'wife' — emerged from Western corners as an online subculture of young married women romanticising mid-century domesticity of cooking from scratch, keeping house, raising children, being god-fearing and presenting the husband as undisputed breadwinner. A nostalgic 1950s ideal that is currently trending. Controversially.

A quick caveat before anyone reaches for the belan. There is nothing inherently suspect about a woman choosing to be a homemaker. Nor about men who do, although that's a rarer species. But 'tradwives' are a more curated offshoot that warrants a closer look.

Like most online breeds, they have their own aesthetic. In India, the apron has been replaced with a sari pallu, the sourdough starter with roti, and Perry Como for Lata and Asha songs from the 1960s to evoke retro cinematic femininity. The caption — 'A day in my life as a 22-year-old married girl' — rarely varies. The camera wakes up with her, lingering on a fogged bathroom mirror as she brushes her teeth, makes bed with military neatness, draws sindoor with practised precision. Bangles clink as tea is poured for in-laws. Sweeping. Cooking. Temple visit. A 'date' with sasu ma. Fade out in the tired husband's arms. All narrated in a soft, singsong cadence. It's pitched as "domestic bliss" and filmed with a phone and ring light mounted on a tripod. To be repeated tomorrow.

The desi tradwives are surprisingly young. Priya Dutta, 23, films from Islampur, West Bengal and has over 35,000 followers across social media platforms. Her early English vlogs carried what she admits was an AI-generated Yankee accent. She has since switched to carefully acquired Hindi although Bengali is her mother tongue. "Because my audience now is pan-India who mostly understand Hindi."

She married at 20. A "love marriage" and now lives "in a big joint family with husband and in-laws". Urban horror stories paint joint families as pressure cookers but in Priya's vlogs, it's unexpectedly harmonious. "My main motivation," she says, "is to show that a Gen Z woman still believes in marriage and can live happily and peacefully in a joint family." Her reel titles swing between "A day in my life as a bahu, not baddie" to the cheekier "Boys please scroll, I'm married".

Her age, inevitably, draws comment. "People started saying getting married at this age is too early," she recalls. "I don't know what the perfect age is… 25? 35? When you find a good person and feel it is the right time, then you marry." Divorce, she adds briskly, can happen at 20 or 40.

TANISHKKA TIWARI, 22
Madhya Pradesh
389K followers
Content: Homemaking routines, puja prep, rituals, dates with mother-in-law, temple visits and the aesthetics of domestic calm
Collabs: Skincare, cosmetics, home decor

In Delhi, 23-year-old Japneet Kaur has built 54,000 followers in six months on a similar template of 'A day in my life as a 22-year-old married girl'. She used to create makeup content. After her wedding, she paused. "My husband nudged me into filming mini vlogs." The numbers climbed as eyeshadow tutorials gave way to chai and chapati.

Their lookbook is consistent. Sindoor, bangles, mangalsutra, unwavering even inside the swimming pool. Followers range from a few thousand to millions.

Supporters see pride in homemaking. Critics see the normalisation of regressive gender roles and a glossing over of unpaid domestic labour in a country where many women have no choice but to live with it.

Priya pushes back. "Living in a joint family doesn't mean you will be tortured," she says. "People think if you wear modern clothes, you must remove bangles and sindoor. I've seen my mother like that since childhood."

Japneet bristles when trolls call her a maid. "I'm a political science graduate. Cooking for my family isn't being a maid. I want people to know that love and happiness exist with your family, in-laws, and husband. When you enter a new family, there have to be adjustments from both sides. With time, it gets better," she says. When trolls accused her of glamourising housework, she shot back: "If I'm happy, what exactly is the problem?"

Rukmini Sen, professor of Sociology at Ambedkar University Delhi, whose research explores feminist pedagogy, resists easy dismissal, too. "There's something to be said about being married at a very young age and thinking that there is a romanticism and even liberation in married life," she says, adding that for some women it can feel like respite from parental control. "What appears as submission may also be an escape."

She cautions against writing off traditional homemakers. "Generations of women have been tradwives their entire lives. Many still live such lives and make a lot of negotiations," says Sen. "Social media can be a refuge for them but in this case, it's being used conservatively."

That conservatism plays out reel after reel. Tanishkka Tiwari, with nearly 40,000 followers, began with 'In the life of a 21-year-old married girl' and now simply updates the age. "Mere patidev ke liye chai bana rahi hu (I am making tea for my husband)," she announces, as her mornings slide into evenings in the kitchen, arranging puja thalis, eating solitary meals, and temple darshans. Her comments section swings between admiration — "The way you gracefully stay Sanatani and do household works…looks great" — and pointed questions about education and early marriage.

In Chennai, Neha Mishra rebranded herself this January as 'Grihini Neha'. Within a month, she gathered over 1,000 followers as "a housewife and a mother of two" whose aim is to "turn ordinary days into inspo". Her "Friday sukoon with hubby" reels show her picking outfits as her husband returns from work with flowers for her hair and bazaar trips come hashtagged #sabzimandidiaries.

Then there is V Ragini Mathur from Delhi, 'Ginikizindagi — ek grihini', with close to two lakh followers whose bio reads "I am a housewife leading a beautiful and contented life." In practice, that means lunch boxes, long stretches at the stove or the mirror — and, slipped between them, promotions for children's apps, vitamin serums, bangles and crockery.

Because yes, there is money here. Local kitchen appliances, skincare, jewellery and home decor brands have found in them natural collaborators. Priya fields skincare, Valentine's gifting sites, shampoo deals, song promotions and even managed to channel her followers into her online clothing business. Japneet folds hair tools and lipstick and contouring into her cooking and cleaning routines.

"That itself is a paradox," says Sen. The reel works because it feels fluent in family duties and devotion. Yet, even as these tradwives promote a life orbiting the husband and home, that performance generates income and autonomy while pushing a hyper-domestic ideal many women have spent decades trying to break free from.

PRIYA DUTTA, 23
West Bengal
80.7K followers
Content: Joint family vlogs centred on daily homemaking, marriage and 'Gen Z bahu' life
Collabs: Skincare, gifting sites, shampoo deals, song promotions; also runs her own online clothing business

JAPNEET KAUR, 23 | Delhi
71K followers
Content: Mini vlogs blending cooking, cleaning, dates with in-laws and couple moments with beauty and lifestyle
Collabs: Makeup tutorials, hairstyling tools, salwar suits and ethnic wear, quick commerce

The good bahu aesthetic has resurfaced in popular culture, too, not least in the revival of 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' after 25 years.

So, are tradwives anti-feminists? Yes and no. Some consider staying home a feminist choice, though not all reckon with the privilege that allows it. "I don't think the tradwife phenomenon is asserting any of the tenets of feminism," says Sen, which for her, rests on equality and socio-economic justice. Sen finds the trend "very disturbing". "It presents the heterosexual family in a very stereotypical way, which itself has undergone so much transformation."

These women themselves are aware of the critique, though unmoved by it. "Even someone who studies or works outside still makes their bed and washes dishes," argues Priya. She and Japneet return, stubbornly, to "choice".

And perhaps that is the crux. Choice. Fluff the pillows, cook until sunset and draw the sindoor thick and proud if it makes you happy. But when Shanu, under the handle roti_kapda_ghar, treats 'Sunday room reset' as "therapy" and says she has "killed so many versions of myself to become this calm", the lines begin to blur.

The reel-ity you don't see

Anurag Dobhal's livestreamed crash highlights the risks of an always-on life. Behind the glam, many influencers grapple with nasty trolls and constant pressure

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When attention becomes livelihood, losing it can feel like losing everything. This month, distressed YouTuber Anurag Dobhal (UK07 Rider) livestreamed what he called his "final drive", following a public fallout with his family as he crashed his car into a highway divider and ended up in ICU, in a chilling reminder of how the public and private can collapse into one moment online.

At 25, Udit Rajput knows that pressure intimately. A dating content creator for the past three years, he has built a niche decoding modern relationships through videos on red flags and situationships. His work depends on brand deals and engagement, with constant pressure to outdo himself. "You have to give a banger every time," he says. His mornings revolve around metrics — views, followers, likes — followed by the anxiety of what next in the night. Trolls are an occupational hazard. "I am used to being called a red flag, playboy....But then I realise if even clean content makers are getting trolled, then perhaps the problem isn't me," he says. That detachment cracked this January, when a fellow influencer he was dating accused him of infidelity online.

Within a day, the situation snowballed into a digital storm. He woke up to nearly 18,000 comments one morning — 16,000 abusive. "Suddenly, I was trending on Insta, Reddit, even Zee News. My memes were made next to Kartik Aryan! Morning to night, I was only getting hate," he recalls. "Everything seemed over then."

Soon, the Noida-based influencer deactivated his Instagram, isolated himself at his sister's house and withdrew completely. "It was the most 'ganda' phase of my life," he says. "I had prior brand commitments so couldn't take a break for therapy. Eventually, I had to put out a post saying 'please stop'. I was wrecked." Now slowly recovering, he reflects on what the episode revealed. "They will laugh even at a video where someone is live-streaming their suicide. I've seen that happen," he adds.

India's creator economy — valued at $12–$25 billion — promises overnight fame and fortune, but beneath the filters lies a harsher reality where algorithms shape self-worth and likes are lifelines.

In 2025, 24-year-old entrepreneur Misha Agrawal died by suicide, with her family linking it to anxiety over falling followers. That same year, a 21-year-old creator in Surat consumed poison over stagnant growth. The numbers are stark. According to Later's 2023 Creator Mental Health Report, 43% of influencers report burnout, while a Linktree survey found 58% say their self-worth drops when content underperforms. In India, a 2024 Spotify study across metros found nearly 80% report extreme stress from 24/7 "always-on" pressures.

Image: AI

FAME, FOLLOWERS, FALLOUT

In her 2025 book 'Never Logged Out: How the Internet Created India's Gen Z', Ria Chopra writes that digital fame is both seductive and burdensome, "glamorous" on the surface, but an "Atlantean burden" to carry. Through conversations with creators, she identifies three core stressors shaping influencer life today. First is financial precarity where brand deals are unreliable and income unpredictable. Second is the disproportionate scrutiny faced by women and queer creators. The third — and most complex — is cultural and political. Creators are expected not just to entertain, but to respond to conflicts and social issues in real time. This creates a constant tension of what to say and its consequences.

The creator economy is a bubble waiting to burst. "It is vastly overvalued, often misunderstood, and wildly devoid of thoughtful direction but still running all-engines blazing. And I worry that a lot of young creators who achieved fame and virality in their teens and became full-time creators, have known no other life than the intoxicating one of adoring parasocial fans. They'll have to learn how to deal with burnout, and irrelevance," writes Chopra.

For Chandni Tugnait, a psychotherapist and life coach who works extensively with influencers, the pressures of digital fame manifest as "identity fragmentation". Tugnait draws a distinction between influencers and traditional young celebrities who achieve fame early in life, pointing out that the influencer experience is far more volatile. "For influencers, it's a daily, sometimes even hourly, cycle," she explains. "They suddenly go viral, feel a dopamine high, then engagement drops and there's a crash. Over time, this creates a neuropsychological pattern where validation itself becomes addictive. Unlike the gradual decline often seen in child actors or young celebrities, influencers experience sharp, repetitive highs and lows." And that toll is now manifesting in physical symptoms among some of her clients, like high blood pressure, gastric issues, fatigue, even signs of accelerated ageing.

Even as the psychological toll of online visibility intensifies, intervention systems are evolving alongside it. In Uttar Pradesh, a collaboration between police and tech platforms is working to prevent the worst outcomes. Rahul Srivastava, PRO to the DGP and social media in-charge of the UP Police, says the state's partnership with Meta — operationalised in 2023 — has already had a significant impact. "We have saved more than 2,200 lives in three years," he says. The system flags potentially suicidal content through Meta's AI tools, alerting a 24x7 social media monitoring centre, after which local police are dispatched. While alerts are not specific to influencers, the patterns mirror behaviours seen among highly online users. "The 19-25 age bracket is proportionately higher," he says.

What stands out, however, is how distress plays out in public. "There are cases where someone posts after consuming poison. By the time we reach, they're already frothing, while the family has no idea," he says. A worrying pattern, he says, is live-streaming. "People live-stream that they are going to take their life, but cops in UP are watching now," he says, adding that police have intervened in situations ranging from attempted hangings to people on railway tracks.

SURVIVORS OF THE CRASH

Those who have come back from the brink are finding their own ways to cope. Kolkata-based singer-influencer Debolina Nandy attempted suicide after going live on Facebook one midnight last year. She was later hospitalised and survived. "Breaking down in public isn't good, but sharing real problems can help others. Influencers should be honest about their lives from the start. I have started meditation to counter negativity," says Nandy.

But for Harshveer Jain, influencer and author, the real risk lies in turning content creation into a full-time identity. "This is not my real profession," he says, adding that having anchors outside the internet keeps him grounded. He likens virality to a "lottery" few are prepared for. And the competition now is relentless. "You're not just competing with other creators, you're competing with everything from Bigg Boss, cricket, movies, even Donald Trump. Between you dropping a song and Trump dropping a bomb, who is going to get the views?" he asks bluntly.

Many creators move to metros chasing scale. "You miss out on the people who knew you before all of this," says Jain, based in Indore. "Whenever I feel myself getting sucked into the internet spiral, time with old friends reminds me of who I was before my online self existed." But as Rajput slows down on the content treadmill, he is struck by how exposed the profession is. "If you have a fight with your colleague, you go home. The next day, strangers are not going to troll you," he says. Online, there is no such boundary.

> Creators are not just competing with other content creators for attention. There's Bigg Boss, cricket, movies, even Donald Trump. Between you dropping a song and Trump dropping a bomb, who's going to get the views?
> **Harshveer Jain,** INFLUENCER AND AUTHOR

Meet the adoptive mom who took on the law, and won

Shruti.Sonal@timesofindia.com

SUNDAY PROFILE

In a significant ruling last week, the Supreme Court held that an adoptive mother should be entitled to maternity leave of 12 weeks irrespective of the age of the adopted child. Earlier, adoptive mothers got maternity leave only if the child was below three months old. The judgment came as the culmination of a five-year legal battle led by Delhi-based fintech lawyer Hamsaanandini Nanduri.

"That day is still so fresh in my mind. It will always be one of my favourite days.... We were so nervous, so anxious, to see what is in store for us," recalls Nanduri about that day in Sept 2017 when she and her husband brought home the two siblings they had adopted.

"I became a parent to two children overnight. Life was chaotic to say the least," she says. There were two new children in their home and the couple struggled to find their footing as food, sleep, even language felt alien. The girl was five, and the boy was nearly two. Having requested maternity leave to ease this phase of transition, an email from the law firm she worked at landed in her inbox. She had been granted only six weeks of leave, compared to the 26 weeks that biological mothers are entitled to by law.

"I was so desperate for more leave," shares Nanduri, who is now in her late 30s. As she navigated the travails of new motherhood — learning how to understand the Hindi dialect the kids spoke, making the house toddler-proof, and spending sleepless nights to ensure they adjusted to the new environment — she managed to get unpaid leave of another six weeks but it remained a struggle.

"Adoption is quite complicated. Imagine a child who is leaving behind everything that they know and is going to a stranger's house, probably a strange place, hearing a language that they don't understand, and being offered food that the child has never been conditioned to, or does not like the taste of. I remember my children had so many allergies when we went to Bengaluru because of the new air. The entire process can really take a toll on you," she says. So, it felt unjust that she and other adoptive mothers like her were discriminated against simply because they had not given birth. Why, she reasoned, would adopting a 90-day-old baby get you 12 weeks of leave but if the infant is three months and one day, you get none?

As things slowly settled at home, Nanduri reached out to her college friend and Supreme Court lawyer Bani Dikshit, sharing the anger that she felt at the discrimination. In 2021, she started an online petition called 'heart moms need love' advocating for equality in maternity rights. Aware of the privileges she had as a lawyer, she decided to challenge Section 60(4) of the 2020 (Social Security) Code (erstwhile Section 5(4) of the Maternity Benefit Act) in the SC. Dikshit, who represented her, argued that the three-month age limit violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

Quoting lines from South Korean poet Fleur Conkling Heyliger, "Never forget for a single minute, / You didn't grow under my heart, / But in it", the court also outlined that reproductive autonomy does not begin and end with biology.

Dikshit says, "Even though adoption is statutorily recognised, a judgment like this legitimises it in society. For many, an adoptive mother is still seen as less than a biological mother," she adds. Addressing questions about why adoptive mothers need any maternity leave at all — considering they haven't gone through the gruelling months of pregnancy — Dikshit has one response. "On the contrary, an adoptive mother doesn't have nine months to prepare, and we are not even giving her three months to get accustomed to this large change and to ensure that the child is rehabilitated."

Nanduri says the case was never about blurring the distinction between biological and adoptive mothers, but recognising the struggles of the latter, which were "completely disregarded" and "largely invisible" in the existing legal framework. "An adoptive mother also has challenges that are unique to this way of building a family. It's a very uncertain journey that could take six months or four years. And when the referral hits you, you get 48 hours to decide whether you're going to go ahead with it or not. If you accept the referral, you get only 21 days to bring your children home," she says.

> **An adoptive mother also has challenges that are unique. It's a very uncertain journey that could take six months or four years**

It's not just the recognition of this struggle that makes the ruling important. "It discusses reproductive autonomy as a facet of Article 21, and can be cited in cases of abortion rights, offspring from marital rape, and even same-sex relationships," Dikshit says. As the judgment outlines, the striking down of the age limit could also have consequences for the adoption of disabled children, who often have to wait longer to complete formalities. It also put the spotlight on how, in case of restrictions, single adoptive mothers may be compelled to choose between their jobs and the needs of the adopted child, undermining the "very purpose of social welfare legislation designed to support working women".

For Nanduri, the ruling has brought a sense of closure. She confesses that she finally feels "seen and heard" — as do the other adoptive mothers in the various support groups that she is a part of. She also hopes it helps to move away from the notion that it is significantly harder to adopt older children. "It's a myth that if you adopt an infant, it's going to be easier because the child doesn't know or doesn't remember their past. Any separation from the birth family is a traumatic event, and it always stays with the child, no matter how old they are," she adds.

NOT INVISIBLE: Nanduri says the case was about recognising the struggles of adoptive mothers like her

GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

- **UK** Up to **52 weeks** (partly unpaid)
- **New Zealand** **26 weeks** paid (govt-supported)
- **Ireland** **24 weeks** (only one parent)
- **Norway** Minimum **15 weeks** (primary carer)
- **US** Up to **12 weeks** unpaid (eligibility based on employers)
- **Russia** **70 days** (110 days for multiple children; one parent)

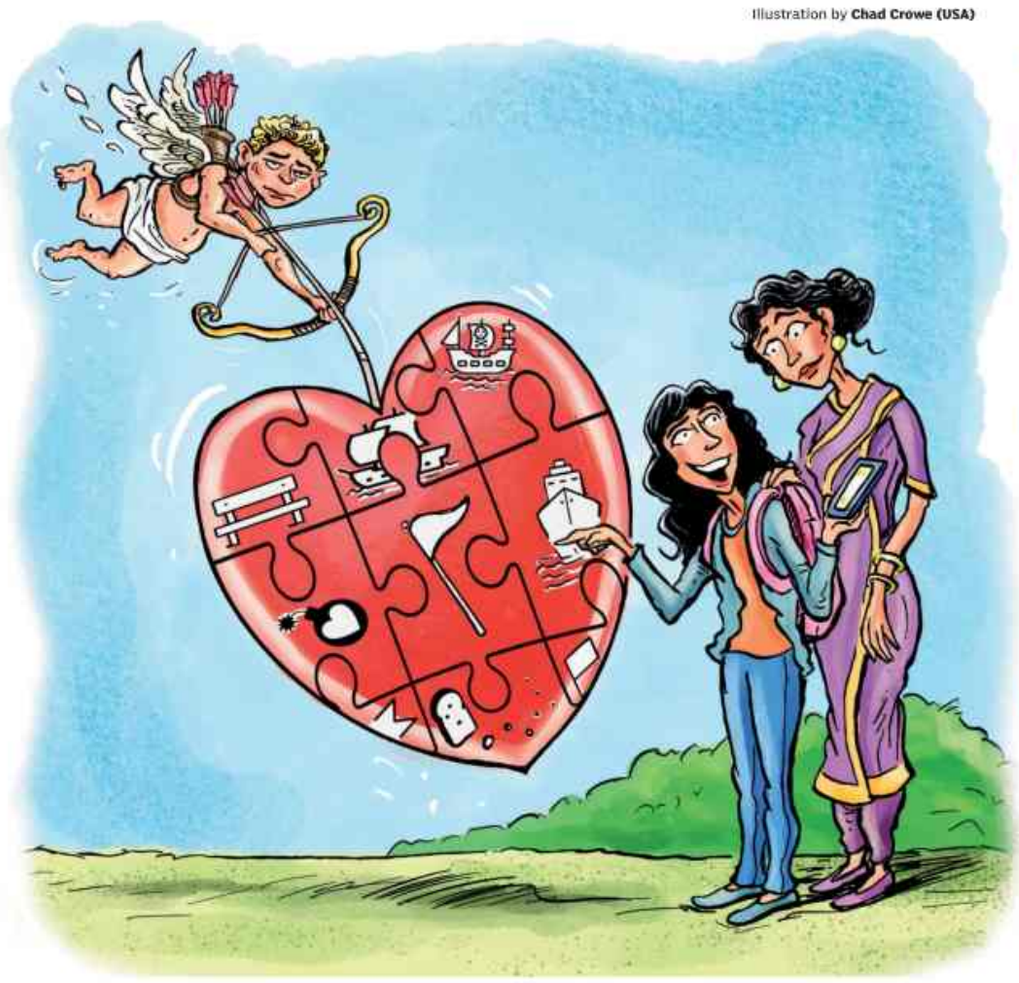
Priyanka with Mivaan

Kiss emojis & Roblox romance: How to decode your teen's dating drama

As teens start dating younger and more casually, parents are moving from control to conversations

Neha Bhayana

Illustration by **Chad Crowe (USA)**



A sneaky glimpse at her 14-year-old daughter's WhatsApp left Shrima Ravindran* aghast. The seemingly endless stream of messages, with a liberal sprinkling of kiss emojis, made it clear to her that the boy was more than a friend. Ravindran's first instinct was to read out the riot act. Sukanya* had just started class 10 and hardly needed the distraction, she reasoned. Having grown up in an orthodox Chennai family, Ravindran herself had not even looked beyond her books till she graduated. Holding back her emotions, she discussed the matter with her husband and, though he was equally upset, he felt that they should not interfere in their daughter's life. So, Ravindran restrained herself but kept an eye on Sukanya's phone. Within a couple of months Sukanya had broken up, dated another boy but ended that too. "One day, she told me about these boyfriends on her own," says Ravindran, who pretended to know nothing. "She felt happier being single as she was tired of constant updates and the compulsory good night messages."

Ravindran is not the only one. Despite their reservations, millennial parents across the country are learning to be less intrusive and more open-minded as their wards explore relationships in their teens. While Gen Zs have already had one (or more) serious relationships, the older Gen Alphas have also jump-started their dating journey, via Roblox invites, Snapchat flirting and ChatGPT-framed sweet nothings. "My younger daughter is just 12 but she has already been dating as have most of her friends," Ravindran says.

Experts believe the dating age has come down as children are hitting puberty earlier, and are also more exposed to the idea of romance and relationships. "When we were growing up in the 80s and 90s, there used to be just one or two couples in school. Their affairs were treated like scandals. Now, dating has become a norm among teens and a number of them explore relationships at a young age," says Mumbai-based parent coach Piya Marker who has a 14-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter.

NO SECRETS, PLEASE

Most parents, just like those before them, want their kids to focus on studies instead of romance but also understand that playing cool might be the only way forward. "Spending time on social media or WhatsApp with a partner is a big drain on time and energy at this stage of their lives, when they need to take exams and build their career," says educationist and parent coach Pallavi Rao Chaturvedi. "Parents feel helpless, but they are definitely being friendly to keep the channel of communication open."

Parent counsellors say today's mums and dads realise (sometimes because of their own clandestine rendezvous when they were growing up) that strict parents don't raise obedient kids, they raise better liars. "Do you want to create that safe space and be that person that they can come and talk to? Or are you going to be the person they hide things from because they know you don't approve or you are judgmental?" says Chennai-based parent educator Seemanthini Iyer. Marker agrees: "Parents now feel that it is better to know what their kids are doing rather than to prohibit and be in the dark."

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

Gen Z globally shows a preference for casual, low-commitment relationships. A recent Bumble study found most single Indians want 'low-pressure' connections and 73% of Gen Z respondents said they were not ready for a serious relationship. "I think casual relationships are quite the norm in high schools and colleges now. The flavour of dating is now more of temporary companionship. Parents are trying to accept their kids are not in it for love or anything long term," says Chaturvedi.

Marker points out that some kids date simply for "social credit". "Sometimes, the head boy dates the head girl or a male footballer dates a female one, simply because that is the cool thing to do. I don't think that it is worrisome as long as it's not taking them away from normal functionality or causing any emotional stress," Marker adds.

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A SNEAK PEEK INTO THE GEN Z DATING DICTIONARY

What's Up?

Situationship: A romantic connection without official commitment or exclusivity

Delusionship: A one-sided relationship based on fantasy

Textationship: A relationship that exists primarily through text messaging

Watch out

Red flag: Toxic behaviour such as disrespect, sexism, abuse or control

Green flag: One is called a green flag when one is empathetic & trustworthy

Beige flag: Displays a quirky or odd habit that is annoying but not a deal breaker

Trust not

Breadcrumbing: Giving just enough attention to keep the partner hooked

Benching: Keeping someone "on the bench" as a backup option while pursuing other potential partners

Love Bombing: Over-the-top affection (gifts etc) in order to manipulate someone

Today's youth have also crafted their own language of love to correctly capture the flexibility, fluidity, and complexity of their connections (see box). While most parents have heard of these terms via reels, they often don't know how to react to them. Marker recently met a couple who were super stressed because their 21-year-old daughter said she was just "trying it out" with a college mate. The girl and boy eventually got into a commitment six months later, but that period was difficult for her parents to stomach.

SINGLE, NOT LOVIN' IT

Parents and experts point out that the most worrisome aspect about the 'new normal' teenhood is that there is immense pressure to be in a romantic relationship of some sort. "There is massive pressure to couple up. Unfortunately, kids who are single bear the brunt," says Chaturvedi. Ravindran has seen how a child's self-esteem takes a hit when they are not seeing anyone. Sukanya recently confided in her that she felt left out because she was the only one in her group who didn't have a boyfriend. "She felt that nobody likes her and asked me if it was because of her complexion. My younger one also feels the pressure, though she is only in seventh grade. She wonders if no boy is asking her out because she is taller than them," she says, adding that she feels sad that her daughters' self-worth has become tied up to their love life.

GUIDE, DON'T GUARD

Experts say most parents are iffy about their kids dating, as they fear they will engage in sexual activities with their partners which can have very real consequences. They underline the importance of conversations about boundaries, safety and age-appropriate limits in terms of physical intimacy. "I recognise that it can be hard for many parents due to our value system. We did not have these conversations growing up, but we need to overcome our squeamishness (and judgement) and talk to the children about it, not alarm them. Parents should create that space for them," says Iyer. Chaturvedi agrees, "Don't assume that your child is not interested or into dating. Normalise talking about relationships and also talk about the importance of not falling for pressure, and not changing oneself just to please one's partner."

Marker says it is also important to familiarise kids with society's deeply-embedded gender biases. "Boys are perceived as cool when they have multiple girlfriends, but girls lose reputation if they move from boy to boy," she says. "I told my daughter that dating is a normal part of growing up but you need to know how to conduct yourself. There have been cases of children who handled relationships very poorly and were ostracised from the peer group. This happened recently with a 14-year-old I know. No one wanted to hang out with her. I told my daughter that the other child is not a bad person; she just made bad choices."

There is another pain point for parents: the pressure to send nudes. "Young girls are very vulnerable. They want the boy to think they are cool so they end up sharing inappropriate photos," says Ravindran, adding that she is concerned about her daughter falling for 'truth or dare' and 'never have I ever' kind of games, which the kids play often during free periods.

Marker suggests parents should not tell kids not to do this or that. "Just ask them to not do anything they are not comfortable with and trust their instincts. We often underestimate their intelligence," she says.

OPEN IS BEST

Experts say parents need to guide kids of different ages using appropriate language. One needs to be especially tactful while talking to young adults as they don't like to be controlled, even if they are still living under the parents' roof. If the child is not threatened or interrogated, they will be more open to discuss their dating choices. "The parent should observe and try to understand their child's dating journey. If somebody is a serial dater, it literally means that person has a fear of being alone and the relationship is a crutch. You can then guide or seek help accordingly," says Marker. Parents who invest in a friendly equation with their kids are in the best position. When Meghna Bhatt's* son started dating at the age of 14 and told her he was seeing someone, she was excited. "I was happy he felt he could talk to me about his girlfriend. I had grown up in a conservative Punjabi family where we were told never to talk to boys, so telling our parents about our crushes or interactions with a boy was unimaginable. That's all the more reason I wanted to have an open-minded relationship with my child," she says.

Mehta advised her son not to rush into "getting physical" and explained the concept of consent. "He came home one day blushing, and told me that he had his first kiss," she recalls, adding that she continues to guide her son about what to expect and how he should ensure he does not hurt his own feelings or those of his girlfriend.

**Names changed on request*

> I think casual relationships are quite the norm in high schools and colleges now. The flavour of dating is now more of temporary companionship, and parents are trying to accept their kids are not in it for love or anything long term
> **Pallavi Rao Chaturvedi,** PARENT COACH

It was a journey towards acceptance, says mother raising children with autism

Raising a kid is tough. Raising four is tougher. ***Sangeetha Chakrapani*** *has brought up quadruplets, two of them with autism, bravely facing unique challenges at every step. She is now using her experience and learnings to create a better world for neurodivergent kids. The Mumbai mom, whose memoir 'Whatever It Takes' was released recently, spoke to* ***Neha Bhayana*** *about how acceptance can help families with autism find their 'happily ever after'*

When doctors figured you were expecting quadruplets, they advised you to go for foetal reduction and keep only the two healthier babies, but you refused. Your kids are 22 now. How has this journey changed you?

I don't like surprises anymore. I watch the same movies and read the same books. I surround myself with predictable routines, but life continues to present me with unpredictable things. The quadruplets were not a surprise that I could not handle, as I have always wanted a big family. My grandmother had ten children, though not simultaneously. Many women have had babies one after the other, year after year. It's not a big deal. That my children had autism was the surprise I could not accept, and I knew it would be a tough journey. But once I started walking that path, new vistas of hope and opportunity became visible to me. I could see that autism and living happily can go side by side. Often, I have felt alone and overwhelmed. Not that people did not ask how I am, but I felt no one understood me. It was a journey towards self-acceptance, accepting my children and respecting their unique identities. My children grew up, and I grew up all over again with them.

In 2015, you started a non-profit organisation (Together Foundation) to impart skill training to young adults with autism. Do you think govt and non-govt organisations ought to explore more employment avenues to tap the potential of people with autism?

Years ago, I had knocked at the doors of a leading hypermarket, carrying a box of our freshly-baked cookies. They would not even open the box of cookies, much less taste them. "Who are you?", "What's your credibility?" they asked. That day, I vowed to myself that never again would anyone ask my special adults or me these questions. In a year, our bakery got the FSSAI certification and Together Foundation has never looked back. With an increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism and growing awareness about the potential of people who have autism, the future lies in building autism-smart work environments. Businesses must zero in on autism-friendly offices and create sheltered and supportive environments that will also create manifold job opportunities for neurotypical people.

> It's common to say things like: every person with autism has a special talent. Can we say this for every person with autism? Many of them are average individuals leading average lives of great determination

The Supreme Court recently banned stem cell therapy for autism as there is no scientific evidence of its efficacy, putting an end to years of false hope. Do you think the focus needs to shift from curing autism to supporting it?

This is a painful question for most parents to answer. Most of us have a tiny flickering hope that autism is treatable: a hope that, at first, burns very brightly when the child is diagnosed and grows duller and duller as time passes. Parents try multiple avenues of treatment for their child: homoeopathy, ayurveda, acupressure, acupuncture, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, chelation, and craniosacral treatment. There is no denying the fact that, until now, there is no single known and proven cure for autism. So, what must we bear in mind? First, do not try any treatment that has the potential to harm or negatively impact the child. Save your resources. Autism is an expensive disability to have, and parents would do well to put their resources to better use. Therapy is slow and the centres where one can get free or subsidised consultations are few and far between. However, slowly but surely, we see our children responding, learning and growing. There is no better alternative.

'What happens after us?' is the biggest worry for parents with special needs kids. Several parents (including you) are building private residential facilities for people with autism. While these will secure the future of kids whose parents have the funds and foresight, there is little hope for poor families. Your thoughts?

Disability is a luxury that many cannot afford. It raises its head in the most poverty-stricken and underprivileged areas. Right from the time of diagnosis in early childhood to assisted living in adulthood, opportunities for the underprivileged are limited. People in the lower economic strata are not even aware of the resources and schemes that are available. Most residential communities charge a monthly fee of at least Rs 60,000 for individuals with special needs. Our residential facility, The Together Community at Hosur in Tamil Nadu, charges Rs 1 lakh per month for the individual and their parents. Our second goal — and a bigger one — is to work on a low-cost model of residential community for people with special needs, supported by CSR initiatives.

Awareness regarding autism has increased over the past decade, but mainstream schools are still reluctant to admit children with special needs. Are special schools the only solution?

Mainstream schools are reluctant because they are not equipped with the resources and infrastructure. In order to provide inclusive education, the regular schools must have sufficient teachers who have the knowhow to contribute to an inclusive classroom; professional expertise to ensure the neurodivergent programme is holistic; additional space for taking extra classes; an outdoor programme for ensuring physical exercise and engagement breaks; assisting staff to help with restless or hyperactive children; and tailored programmes to promote meaningful social inclusion. Without these resources, many schools ask parents to provide a shadow teacher for their child, whose salaries have shot up due to high demand. Inclusive education will need to be funded in govt schools and other schools in lower economic areas. Parents who belong to middle-income families cannot afford it either. So, in despair, they start looking for special schools. However, 'special school' is not a dirty word, and we need to be more inclusive and accepting. It's ironic that special schools, which provide the most critical services, are not accepted and are considered secondary. What hurts us the most about special schools? That they are limited, segregated spaces where only people with special needs go. Add in volunteers from different walks of life, collaborate with neurotypical schools and they won't be segregated anymore.

In your book, you revealed that you gained a lot of weight over the years due to stress and depression. Do you wish there was better support available for parents of neurodivergent children too?

Can I commit that if all my children had been perfectly okay, I would not have put on weight? No. Maybe I still would have, and maybe my tendency for weight gain just got a push because of the challenges life placed before me. So, I happily said 'I am sad' and continued spreading Amul butter on my toasted bread. Having said that, parents of neurodivergent children need a lot of care, support and undiluted love: from their families, professionals, neighbours and fellow human beings. Parents also need to know when to let go of their special needs children and let them grow up.

You have written about the 'many-splendoured and multiple frustrating aspects' of autism. Can you elaborate?

Tapping on an object repeatedly. Speaking about private things in a public space. Touching oneself inappropriately. Not knowing one's boundaries. Inability to express oneself, leading to challenging behaviours. There are many such frustrating behaviours which form a big part of living with autism. However, when we're able to identify the trigger for the behaviour, it's fascinating to see how an empathetic and scientific approach can help individuals regulate themselves. As a professional, I've lost count of the number of times parents have been at their wits' end, unable to understand why their son or daughter behaves the way they do. Countless consultations, psychiatrist visits, medication, rehab...none of them has worked and they continue to struggle.

> Parents of neurodivergent children need a lot of care, support and undiluted love: from their families, society, and professionals. They also need to know when to let go of their children

Teaching or training individuals with autism is a beautiful experience for professionals like me who like to have a structured approach in which detail is God. It's also beautiful when we accept autism as one more way of living life and stop judging people with autism by their achievements. Nowadays, it's become common to say things like: every person with autism has a special talent, a passion. Discover it and you are set. Can we say this for every person with autism? No. Many of them are average individuals leading average lives: lives of great determination and courage, which involve co-existing in a world so different from theirs while relying on people to extend the extra support they need to live their lives with equality and dignity.

Iran's key nuclear facility struck after Trump says US looking to 'wind down'

Israel: Attacked Tehran University Facility Used For Making N-Components

Dubai: Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was hit in an airstrike Saturday, an official Iranian news agency reported, saying there was no radiation leakage.

As the war in the Middle East entered its fourth week, Israel defence minister Israel Katz warned of an upcoming surge in attacks on Iran. He spoke shortly after fragments from an Iranian missile slammed into an empty kindergarten near Tel Aviv. Israeli army spokesman Nadav Shoshani posted a video on X of the kindergarten building; no casualties were reported.

Overnight and into the morning, Tehran saw heavy airstrikes, residents said.

Later, the Israeli military said its forces had struck a facility embedded within a Tehran university that was allegedly being used to develop components for nuclear weapons. "The Malek-Ashtar University facility was utilised by the Iranian terror regime's military industries and ballistic missiles array to develop nuclear weapon components and weapons," the military said. "The University was subordinate to Iran defence ministry, and is sanctioned internationally due to its activities over the years to advance the Iranian nuclear programme and to develop ballistic missiles," the military added.

US President Donald Trump said on Friday he was considering "winding down" military operations in the Mideast even as the US was sending three more amphibious assault ships and roughly 2,500 additional Marines to the region. Trump's post on social media followed an Iranian threat to attack recreational and tourist sites worldwide.

Iran's official news agency Mizan said there was no leakage after Saturday's strike on the Natanz nuclear facility, nearly 220km southeast of Tehran. The UN nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency — had said it had "no radiological consequence" were expected from that earlier strike. On Saturday, the IAEA said on X it was informed by Iran about the Natanz strike. AP

3RD HIT ON NATANZ IN LESS THAN A YEAR

- Natanz, **Iran's main uranium enrichment site**, was hit in the first week of the war and several buildings appeared damaged
- Israel & the US struck Iran's nuclear sites also **on June 22, 2025**
- All three of Iran's uranium-enrichment plants — **two at Natanz; one buried inside a mountain at Fordow; and a sprawling complex at Isfahan** — were hit
- The **Operation Midnight Hammer used bunker-buster bombs, cruise missiles** to hit underground infra

A satellite image of Natanz fuel enrichment complex on March 7

Source: Reuters

US: Took out Iran base threatening shipments on Hormuz oil route

The US military declared on Saturday it had taken out an Iranian bunker housing weapons threatening oil and gas shipments in the Strait of Hormuz.

The US statement appeared designed to calm the concerns of energy markets and of Washington's sceptical international allies.

Admiral Brad Cooper, head of US Central Command, said US war planes had dropped 5,000-pound bombs on an underground facility on Iran's coast that was storing anti-ship cruise missiles, mobile launchers and other equipment. "We not only took out the facility, but also destroyed intelligence support sites and missile radar relays that were used to monitor ship movements," Cooper said in a video statement, revealing details of a strike first announced Tuesday. AFP

Judge rejects Trump admin curbs on Pentagon reporters

The Trump administration's decision to curtail the activities of reporters at the Pentagon, which led to the departure of most news organisations from the building, was blocked on Friday by a federal judge in Washington.

The court ruled in favour of a lawsuit brought by the New York Times, which accused the administration of free speech violations.

Last fall, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth demanded that news organisations agree to new limits on their reporting. The Pentagon policy put journalists in danger of being labelled "a security risk" that could've led to credentials being pulled if they were found soliciting material that could be considered classified or Controlled Unclassified Information, a ubiquitous label on defence department documents.

That standard, Judge Paul Friedman wrote in his opinion, "provides no way for journalists to know how they may do their jobs without losing their credentials. The policy therefore is vague in violation of the Fifth Amendment."

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said in a post on X that "We disagree with the decision and are pursuing an immediate appeal."

Bloomberg News, five major television networks as well as the AP, the Times and other news organisations had said they would refuse to sign the policy, and their reporters left on Oct 15.

Journalists had been working in the building, across the Potomac River from Washington in Arlington, Virginia, since the years after World War II.

The judge said that "in light of the country's recent incursion into Venezuela and its ongoing war with Iran, it is more important than ever that the public have access to information from a variety of perspectives about what its govt is doing." BLOOMBERG

Israel says Iranian missile struck town housing nuclear facility

Israel's military said an Iranian missile on Saturday struck the southern town of Dimona, home to a nuclear facility, after medics reported 39 people injured by shrapnel. The army told AFP there was a "direct missile hit on a building" in the town in the Negev desert.

Dimona hosts a facility just outside the main town, widely believed to possess the Middle East's sole, if undeclared, nuclear arsenal. Israel has maintained a policy of ambiguity about its nuclear programme, and the Dimona plant officially focuses on research.

Magen David Adom first responders said their teams treated 39 people at a number of impact sites, including a 10-year-old boy in serious condition who was "fully conscious". The organisation, Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross, released a video of a residential building ablaze in the town. "There was extensive damage and chaos at the scene," paramedic Karmel Cohen said in a statement.

Images shared by Israeli media showed an object hurtling out of the sky at high speed before crashing into the town. AFP

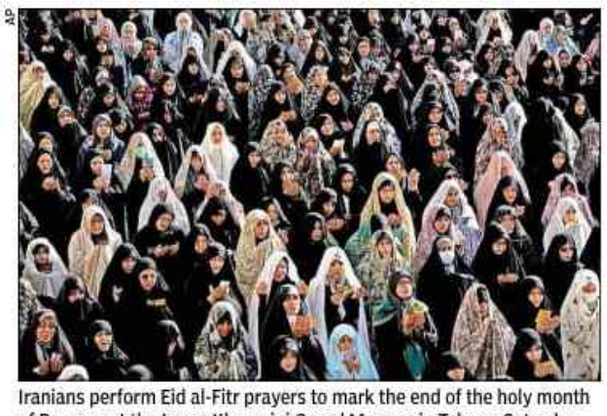
With Anzali attack, Indo-Russian plan of $100billion trade takes a hit

Moscow: The US-Israeli missile attack on Iran's Bandar Anzali, a key transit hub on the INSTC linking Mumbai with St Petersburg, is a major blow to the Indo-Russian ambition of boosting bilateral trade to $100 billion by 2030 via the crucial corridor, experts said Saturday.

The 7,200-kilometre long multi-modal International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) links Mumbai to St Petersburg via Iran, bypassing the Suez Canal, to boost trade between Asia and Europe. The Israeli-American joint strike destroyed the Customs House and other structures in Bandar Anzali on the Caspian Sea coast on March 18, local media reports said.

"This route bypassing Suez canal was considered safe, but now due to higher risks caused by the Israeli-American strikes, the rates of insurance and freight will shoot up, which will have a negative impact on Russia and other CIS countries interested in using it," Professor Renat Karamurzov of Institute of Asia, Africa Studies at the Moscow State University said.

"This corridor is extremely important for our bilateral relations with India as it significantly cuts transit time from 25-30 days to seven days from Moscow to Mumbai," Russian political analyst Sergei Strokan said during a television discussion. According to Russian deputy PM, Vitaly Saveliyev, over 7.5 million tonnes of cargo was transported through the trans-Caspian route by the end of 2025. PTI



AP

Iranians perform Eid al-Fitr prayers to mark the end of the holy month of Ramzan at the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in Tehran, Saturday. The war has so far claimed 3,220 lives in Iran, said US-based rights group HRANA on March 20. Around 1,024 were killed in Lebanon

Iran ready to help Japan ships via Hormuz

Tehran is willing to help Japanese ships transit the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint for global oil supplies, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi told Kyodo News in an interview published Saturday. Japan, world's fourth-ranking economy is the fifth-biggest importer of oil, with 95% coming from Middle East and 70% passing via Hormuz. In a telephone interview with Kyodo News on Friday, Araghchi denied the passage was closed, insisting instead that countries attacking Iran face restrictions, while others were being offered assistance. He said Iran was prepared to ensure safe passage for Japan. "They only need to contact us so we can discuss how this transit can take place." AFP

Targeted F-16 jet of Israel, say Iran Guards

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday they had targeted an Israeli F-16 fighter jet over the country's centre. "An F-16 hostile enemy fighter jet belonging to the Zionist regime was struck at 3.45am in central Iran," the Guards said on their Sepah News website. The Israeli military earlier said a surface-to-air missile had been launched at an Israeli aircraft during "an operational activity" in Iran, without specifying the type of jet. It added that "no damage was caused to the aircraft". AFP

20+ countries want to join bid to open Strait

More than 20 countries on Saturday said that they would contribute to efforts ensuring safe passage in the Strait of Hormuz, condemning Iran's closure of the waterway. "We condemn in the strongest terms attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels, and attacks on civilian infrastructure including," said the 22 countries, mostly European but also including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. AFP

ENERGY SECURITY: AFRICA IN FOCUS

Damage to Gulf energy infrastructure in the Middle East war has turned attention to African nations Algeria and Libya as possible fallback oil and gas suppliers, but both have little room to ramp up output in the short term, experts say

Text: AFP

ALGERIA

- An oil producer and OPEC member that is also **Africa's leading gas exporter**
- Unlike Qatar, which exports liquefied natural gas (LNG) by tanker, **Algeria relies primarily on gas pipelines: the TransMed to Italy and the MedGaz to Spain**
- Combining land-based and underwater sections, **these pipelines offer a significant advantage** as they are out of reach for drones and missiles
- Currently operating at full capacity; **negotiations on for US companies Chevron and ExxonMobil** to bring in capital and technical expertise
- Even with **vast proven reserves exceeding 4,500 billion cubic metres (bcm),** Algeria cannot compete with the Gulf giant — Qatar produces 200bcm of LNG a year; Algeria's capacity is 100bcm

LIBYA

- Has considerable gas resources & **Africa's largest oil reserves** at around 48.4 billion barrels
- Libya **can increase its production and exports to partially offset the drop from the Gulf** but political and security instability remains a major obstacle
- Libya is divided between a **UN-recognised govt based in Tripoli and a rival eastern administration** backed by strongman Khalifa Haftar
- Although **production has reached 1.4 million barrels per day,** it will still take several years of investment and security building to reach a target of 2 million bpd

Attacked Russia's refinery: Ukraine

Ukraine's military said it attacked Rosneft PJSC's Saratov oil refinery in southwestern Russia while regional authorities elsewhere said they repelled drones near crude processing facilities. A processing unit and a vertical storage tank were damaged at the Saratov plant, which produces fuel for Russia's military, the Ukrainian General Staff said Saturday on Telegram. The extent of the damage is being clarified, it said. Ukraine's claim couldn't be independently verified and Rosneft didn't immediately comment. BLOOMBERG

Russia slams EU for energy crisis

European politicians are deliberately plunging their countries into crisis and darkness by continuing to reject Russian energy resources, the Russian foreign ministry spokesperson said on Friday.

"It is not a technical disaster nor any natural cataclysms that are causing the global crisis in the European Union (EU), but rather the decisions of its own leaders, who are simply flipping the switch," Maria Zakharova said in a post on her Telegram channel. IANS

Diego Garcia base key to US ops across Asia

▶Continued from page 1

Iran's state-affiliated Mehr news agency described the strike as a "significant step" that "shows that the range of Iran's missiles is beyond what the enemy previously imagined".

Diego Garcia is crucial to US operations across West Asia, South Asia and the Indo-Pacific. It is about 3,000 km from Bab-el-Mandeb Strait at the mouth of the Red Sea and Malacca Strait near the South China Sea. Because of its strategic position, the base is also central to monitoring activity by China.

The failed missile attack on Diego Garcia has come amid the UK allowing the US to use its military bases to attack Iran. Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi told his UK counterpart, British home secretary Yvette Cooper, on a phone call last Thursday that any American use of British bases would be considered "participation in aggression", according to Tehran's foreign ministry. The UK govt, however, pushed back, with Cooper warning Araghchi "against targeting UK bases, territory or interests directly", according to the UK foreign office.

The island hosts an extensive airfield with runways long enough to accommodate large military aircraft such as B-52 bombers, KC-135 tankers, reconnaissance aircraft and transport planes.

It also has major fuel storage facilities, radar installations and control towers that can support regional military operations. Diego Garcia was a critical, high-volume launchpad for US air operations in the 1991 Gulf War and 2003 Iraq War.

The base also hosts a deep-water port that can dock, resupply and provide maintenance to large naval vessels, including aircraft carriers, destroyers and submarines.

UK to Cyprus: Will not use bases for attacks

Nicosia: Britain will not be using its bases in Cyprus for any offensive action in the Iran crisis, the Cypriot govt spokesperson said on Saturday, citing a phone call between British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides. "The British Prime Minister reiterated ... that the security of the Republic of Cyprus is fundamental to the United Kingdom and, to that end, a decision has been taken to enhance the means contributing to the preventive measures already in place," the spokesperson said in a statement. AP

Prez Putin to Tehran: Russia stands by Iran

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Iranian leaders on Nowruz and said Moscow remained a loyal friend and reliable partner to Tehran, the Kremlin said on Saturday. Putin sent congratulations to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the Iranian new year, the Kremlin said. REUTERS

Trump's emergency barrels being released

The first oil from Donald Trump's planned 172 million-barrel emergency release is set to start flowing soon, the latest move in the administration's battle to keep fuel prices in check. Roughly 45 million barrels are being released from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve, according to a document from the US energy department. That means that refiners and traders subscribed to about half of the 86 million barrels initially offered by the administration.

The level of interest in the volume of oil on offer was surprisingly low considering that Brent crude has traded above $100 a barrel, traders said. The war in Iran has led to a virtual halt in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of global oil transits, with Brent closing at more than $112 on Friday.

Still, the US crude benchmark — West Texas Intermediate — has been trading at a steep discount relative to Brent. Even then, US retail gasoline prices have climbed to their highest in nearly four years, stoking fears over accelerating inflation. Trump is facing intense political pressure to address the sudden rise in fuel prices.

November's midterm polls that will decide control of both houses of Congress hinge in large part on Americans' attitudes toward costs of living, and polls show people have a dim view of Trump's handling of economy. BLOOMBERG

Austria thinks it's a 'dumb war'

We are generally on the right path, the economy is recovering and inflation has dropped to just over 2%," said Austria's finance minister Markus Marterbauer. "And now this unnecessary and dumb war has broken out, which risks derailing growth in Europe." Austria must find $1.16 billion to $2.31 billion in budget savings as part of its consolidation efforts, the minister said. BLOOMBERG

Abuse claims by sister against Altman dismissed

OpenAI Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman won dismissal of a lawsuit by his sister claiming that he sexually abused her for almost a decade. US district judge Zachary Bluestone in Missouri ruled Friday that the claims were "untimely" because the alleged abuse was so long ago. But Bluestone said Ann Altman can revise and refile her complaint.

"The court's ruling relates to procedural matters, which have no bearing on the substance of Ann Altman's claims," Ryan Mahoney, one of her lawyers, said in a statement. "The court granted leave for Ms. Altman to file an amended complaint, which we will do promptly. We will also continue with discovery as scheduled." Legal representatives for Sam Altman declined to comment.

In Jan 2025, Ann Altman alleged that Sam Altman abused and manipulated her while they were growing up in Missouri in the late 1990s to early 2000s. She claimed the abuse began when she was 3 and the last instance allegedly occurred when he was an adult but she was still a minor. BLOOMBERG

Trump admin seeks a leaner United Nations

Washington: The Trump Administration is pushing for a leaner and more focused United Nations, with its top diplomat to the world body, Mike Waltz, telling lawmakers that the organisation must return to its core mission of maintaining peace and security.

Testifying before lawmakers at a congressional hearing in New York, Waltz defended the administration's effort to overhaul the UN, arguing that decades of expansion have not delivered proportional results. "The UN truly does need to get what we're calling back to basics," he said, adding that it must return "to its original mission from its founding back to maintaining international peace and security".

He pointed to a sharp rise in spending, noting that "the UN's budget in the last 25 years has quadrupled" without a corresponding improvement in global stability. "We haven't seen arguably a quadrupling of peace and security around the world commensurate with those hard-earned dollars." IANS

Nicholas Brendon, 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' actor, dead

US actor Nicholas Brendon, known for his role in the hit series "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," has died, his family announced Friday. He was 54. Brendon died in his sleep of natural causes, the family said in a statement posted to social media. They did not say when or where he died.

"Most people know Nicky for his work as an actor and for the characters he brought to life over the years. In recent years Nicky has found his passion in painting and art," the family said.

"Nicky loved to share his enthusiastic talent with his family, friends and fans. He was passionate, sensitive, and endlessly driven to create. Those who truly knew him understood that his art was one of the purest reflections of who he was."

Brendon played Xander Harris in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" over seven seasons between 1997 and 2003.

The show was centred around Buffy, a teenage girl who battles vampires and other monsters while navigating life in high school.

Brendon's character was a close friend of Buffy.

The Los Angeles-born actor was also known for his appearances in shows like "Criminal Minds," "Private Practice" and "Kitchen Confidential," a TV adaptation of Anthony Bourdain's memoir. He appeared in several thriller films.

Brendon had previous health struggles. In a 2023 Instagram post, he told fans he had undergone two spinal surgeries and had a heart attack. In their post Friday, Brendon's family asked for privacy "as we grieve his loss and celebrate the life of a man who lived with intensity, imagination, and heart." AFP

PIO judge in US convicted for laundering

Houston (US): An Indian-origin county judge has been convicted of money laundering following a jury verdict in a high-profile campaign finance case in the US' Texas state and faces removal from office after official sentencing on June 16.

K P George's conviction, a third-degree felony under Texas law, carries a possible sentence of two to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to $10,000. George, who serves as county judge of Fort Bend County — one of the most diverse counties in the country with a significant Indian-American population — was found guilty of misusing campaign funds for personal expenses.

According to prosecutors, George transferred over $46,000 from his campaign account into personal accounts and used the money for private purposes, including a home-related payment. The defence argued that the funds were reimbursements for personal loans he had extended to his campaign. PTI

Jury finds Musk misled Twitter shareholders

A federal jury in California found Friday that tech tycoon Elon Musk misled Twitter shareholders, driving down the company's share price as he was poised to buy it in a $44 billion deal.

The verdict in the class action securities lawsuit means the world's richest person could be ordered to pay billions of dollars, according to damages calculated by jurors. His lawyers said their client will appeal the decision, characterizing it as a "setback."

After a three-week trial in a San Francisco federal court — which included in-person testimony from Musk — the jury found that his two tweets posted in May 2022 contained false statements responsible for a plunge in Twitter's share price.

Musk offers to pay salaries of US airport workers

Elon Musk offered Saturday to pay security personnel at US airports during a political standoff over funding for the department of homeland security, which has led to longer-than-usual lines at airport security checks. AFP

DAILY PLANET

K-pop sensation BTS shuts down central Seoul with a free comeback concert

Getty Images

K-pop boy band BTS performs at Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday. While there were only 22,000 free tickets to the inner area to see it live, authorities had anticipated as many as 260,000 people to show up for the concert, the band's first performance in nearly four years. A whole section of the city was shut with barricades. The Yonhap News Agency reported a turnout of 40,000-42,000. Netflix streamed the concert live to 190 countries

Ex-dir of FBI, who probed Trump campaign, dies

Robert S Mueller III, the FBI director who transformed the nation's premier law enforcement agency into a terrorism-fighting force after the Sept 11, 2001, attacks and who later became special counsel in charge of investigating ties between Russia and Donald Trump's presidential campaign, has died. He was 81. At the FBI, Mueller set about almost immediately overhauling the bureau's mission to meet the law enforcement needs of the 21st century, beginning his 12-year tenure just one week before the Sept 11 attacks. President Trump posted on social media: "Robert Mueller just died. Good, I'm glad he's dead." He added, "He can no longer hurt innocent people!"

Legends, rising stars shine as TOISA celebrates sporting glory

Harmanpreet's Women's World Cup Winning Team Is Awarded Team Of The Year

Shalabh.Saxena@timesofindia.com

Pix: Sunil Kumar

THE GALAXY: A glittering array of award winners with UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath

Lucknow: Bringing together India's finest athletes to celebrate a remarkable year in sports, the Times of India Sports Awards (TOISA) recognised excellence, dedication and the spirit of top achievers by felicitating them in a glittering ceremony here in Lucknow on Saturday.

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath was welcomed by Indian sporting legends Leander Paes, Bhaichung Bhutia, and PT Usha at an awards ceremony which brought the stars together under one roof.

The CM presented the Mentor of the Year award to 1996 Atlanta Olympics tennis bronze medallist Leander Paes even as movie reels of Paes' early days of action and glory running in the background gave goosebumps to the audience.

Emotional chords continued to resonate as the women's World Cup-winning team, led by women's cricket team skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, stepped on to the stage to receive the Best Team trophy from the chief minister.

Yogi also felicitated the blind cricket team. The UP CM also honoured stalwarts Mithali Raj and PR Sreejesh, along with TOISA jury members.

This was followed by the Federation of the Year Award, which was presented to the BCCI and received by Rajeev Shukla.

For its continuous promotion to sports, Uttar Pradesh bagged the State of the Year Award, which was received by secretary, sports, Suhas LY.

Indian professional shooter Samrat Rana was awarded the Sportsperson of the Year (male), while Para Sportsperson of the Year (male) was awarded to javelin thrower Sumit Antil.

Para Sportsperson of the Year (female) went to Sheetal Devi.

UP sports minister presented awards for Special Recognition for Athletes from UP to Kuldeep Yadav, Suhas LY, Deepti Sharma and Jagbir Singh.

In the 'Athletes Who Shaped Indian Sports in Last Decade' category, Paes and Bhutia honoured Manika Batra, Deepa Karmakar, Sumit Antil, PR Sreejesh, Suhas LY, Avani Lekhara, Deepa Malik and Sakshi Malik.

Saina Nehwal felicitated men's badminton mainstay Lakshya Sen.

Ceremony hosts Angad Bedi and Neha Dhupia added the fun quotient to the event by calling members of the World Cup-winning women's team, captain Harmanpreet Kaur, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma and Harleen Deol on to the stage and engaging them in an impropmtu quiz, at one point even prompting them to shake a leg.

TOISA ambassadors Tapsee Pannu and sports minister Girish Chandra Yadav honoured other awardees.

The galaxy of sports veterans present during the ceremony included Sandeep Patil, Madan Lal, Jasbir Singh, Virendra Singh, Yogeshwar Dutt and Mirabai Chanu.

TOISA
TIMES OF INDIA SPORTS AWARDS

'Presence of champion players inspires everyone'

UP CM Yogi Adityanath Hails TOISA As Launchpad For Emerging Sports Talent

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Welcoming the stars of Indian sport to Lucknow on Friday evening, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath said their presence alone was a source of inspiration for the state's youth. He added that efforts were underway to prepare young athletes in large numbers who'll go on to represent the country at the 2030 Commonwealth Games and the 2036 Olympics.

Addressing the 8th edition of the Times of India Sports Awards (TOISA), the CM thanked **TOI** for once again choosing Lucknow as the host city. He said he was particularly keen to attend the ceremony after seeing the list of sportspersons being honoured.

"Your presence inspires every person from UP. It will help them develop a love for sports and a sporting culture, encourage them to move forward, face challenges and learn how to turn those challenges into victory," he told the athletes.

INVOKING SELF-BELIEF: Yogi Adityanath reserved special praise for India's para athletes

Recalling how he almost missed last year's ceremony, the CM said the 2025 edition coincided with an event at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj which delayed his arrival in Lucknow. "When I finally started from there, I told **TOI** that I would be late but they said that they will wait. I was happy to eventually make it and witness the enthusiasm. This time, I was eager to attend," he said.

Applauding the athletes present, the CM said their achievements — especially in the Paralympics — reflected the significant growth in sports infrastructure and support over the past decade. He highlighted the contributions of UP sports secretary Suhas LY, a Paralympic medallist, and hockey player Raj Kumar Pal, who was appointed deputy SP in the UP Police after his team's international success.

Describing TOISA as a platform that can inspire youth to embrace sports, the CM said the achievements of Indian athletes had brought global recognition to the country. "Their hard work, dedication and intelligence show how teamwork leads to success," he added.

'Have unfinished business at Asian Games, medal overdue'

MIRABAI CHANU

Mirabai Chanu remains the undisputed powerhouse of Indian weightlifting. In a conversation with **Fazal Khan**, the Padma Shri awardee opens up about her "unfinished business" at the Asian Games and the mental discipline required to stay at the top. *Excerpts...*

Will you be repeating your Tokyo feat at the Los Angeles Olympics?

I'm looking forward to my fourth Olympics in Los Angeles and that in itself is very special. Every Olympics teaches you something new and I carry those lessons forward. My focus is not on repeating Tokyo, but on improving myself and performing better than before. India has a lot of young talent coming up and I would be very happy to see more weightlifters doing well at the Olympic-level. It is important for the sport that new athletes rise and take things forward.

How are your preparations going for Los Angeles 2028?

Paris Olympics was a tough experience. Missing a medal by just one kilogram is never easy, but that is a motivating factor for me now. At this level, even the smallest improvement can make a big difference. For Los Angeles, my focus is on discipline and consistency. I am working closely with my coaches on technique, strength and recovery. I am also paying a lot of attention on mental preparation because staying calm under pressure is crucial. The goal is to be in my best shape and give my 100 per cent on competition day.

What are your expectations from the upcoming Commonwealth and Asian Games?

Both competitions are important for me and for the country. The Commonwealth Games have always been special and I would love to perform well there again. At the same time, the Asian Games is very important personally because I still have unfinished business there. The competition level is very high, which makes it even more challenging and exciting.

My focus will be on preparing for a podium finish. ■

'Playing for the country is more meaningful, more motivating'

MANIKA BATRA

Indian table tennis star and Commonwealth Games gold medallist Manika Batra believes a shift in mindset is key when transitioning from individual events to team competitions — especially with the World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London approaching and the road to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics ahead. In a conversation with **Fazal Khan**, Manika opened up on handling pressure and the mantra behind her success. *Excerpts...*

How different is it to play in the Olympics and Asian Games compared to individual tournaments?

There is a clear difference when I am playing for the country at events like the Olympic Games and the Asian Games. In individual tournaments, the focus is more on personal performance, ranking and consistency. However, in multi-sport events, every match feels bigger because you are representing the entire nation. The pressure is higher but it is also more meaningful. It brings a different kind of motivation where you push yourself harder at every moment.

How is your preparation going for the World Team Championships?

My preparation is going well, it's structured. In team events, the approach is slightly different — it is not just about individual performance but also about combinations, understanding teammates and adapting to different match situations. We are focusing a lot on match simulations, fitness and opponent-specific strategies. The idea is to be fully prepared as a team and perform consistently.

You are often called India's 'golden girl'. How do you feel about that tag?

It is always special to receive such recognition. I feel grateful but I do not dwell too much on such titles. For me, it is about staying grounded and continuing to work hard. I see it as a responsibility to maintain a certain level of performance and keep improving.

How are you viewing the upcoming Asian Games?

The Asian Games is always extremely competitive, especially in table tennis. Naturally, every athlete wants to improve on previous results and I'm aiming for that as well. But I prefer to focus on the process rather than looking too far ahead. If I can execute well, stay mentally strong and take it one match at a time, better results will follow. ■

Brighton dent Reds' CL hopes

Reuters

Brighton: Danny Welbeck scored a goal in each half as Brighton & Hove Albion put a dent in Liverpool's Champions League qualification hopes with a deserved 2-1 Premier League victory at the Amex Stadium on Saturday.

Liverpool remained in fifth place with 49 points from 31 games, while Brighton moved up four places to

FOOTBALL

eighth on 43 points to boost their hopes of European football next season.

The match was delayed by 15 minutes due to traffic congestion that held up Liverpool fans, and it was the home side who made the better start as Welbeck headed them in front, one of four goals in his last five games.

Milos Kerkez equalised after a mistake from Brighton captain Lewis Dunk, but Welbeck sealed the victory with a tap-in after 56 minutes that required a VAR check for offside before it was confirmed. On Friday, Manchester United played out a 2-2 draw at Bournemouth.

BAYERN SINK UNION

Serge Gnabry bagged a brace and Harry Kane inched closer to the Bundesliga single-season goals record as Bayern Munich beat Union Berlin 4-0 at home on Saturday. Michael Olise also got on the scoresheet.

Kane's second-half goal took him to 31 goals this campaign -- the same number Union have scored all season -- and 10 short of Robert Lewandowski's mark from 2020-21, with seven games to play.

Select results: EPL: Brighton 2 (Welbeck 14, 56) bt Liverpool 1 (Kerkez 30); Fulham 3 (King 67, Wilson 73, Jimenez 90+5-pen) bt Burnley 1 (Flemming 60). On Friday: Bournemouth 2 (Christie 67, Kroupi 81-pen) drew with Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 61-pen, Hill 71-og). **German league:** Heidenheim 3 (Behrens 56, Pieringer 72-pen, 85) drew with Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Tillman 22, Schick 35, 79); Bayern Munich 4 (Olise 43, Gnabry 45+1, 67, Kane 49) Union Berlin 0. **Italian league:** Parma 0 lost to Cremonese 2 (Maleh 54, Vandeputte 68); On Friday: Cagliari 0 lost to Napoli 1 (McTominay 2). **Spanish league:** Elche 2 (Mir 62, Morente 71) bt Mallorca 1 (Torre 58). AGENCIES

Inter Kashi challenge awaits Bengaluru

With their confidence high after holding Mohun Bagan to a goalless draw at the Sree Kanteerava stadium in Bengaluru last week, former champions Bengaluru FC aim to extend their unbeaten run to three games when they take on debutants Inter Kashi in

ISL

an Indian Super League (ISL) match in Kolkata on Sunday.

While BFC fought till the end to bag a crucial point, Kashi fell short in their last match to Mumbai City FC as they went down 2-1, following a Lalrinzuala Chhangte goal few minutes into the second half. BFC coach Renedy Singh was aware of the tough job at hand for his side.

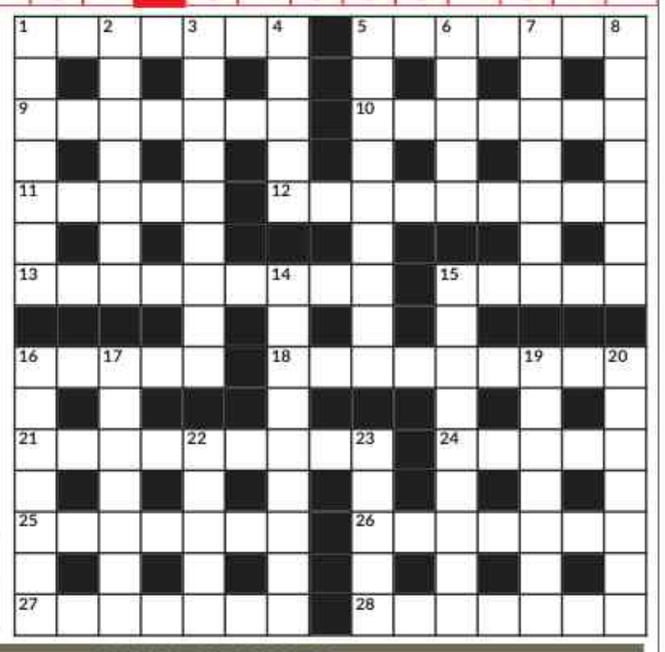
"I expect them to come all out at us tomorrow (Sunday), as they gave a tough fight to (FC) Goa and against Mumbai (City FC) as well. But we have prepared well and we will be ready," Renedy said.

However, having received a red card against Mumbai, coach Antonio Lopez Habas' absence on the touchline may have an impact on Kashi's performance. Meanwhile, young BFC defender Ricky Meetei is geared up to face the tough battle away from home. "The next match will also be tough, but when the coach needs me, I am ready to step up and play," said Ricky. **Result: On Saturday:** Kerala Blasters 1 (Fallout Ndiaye 65) lost to Punjab FC 3 (Samir Zeljkovic 7, Bede Osuji 38, Dani Ramirez 38). **Today's match: In Kolkata:** Inter Kashi vs Bengaluru FC (7.30 pm). TNN

THE TOI CROSSWORD

CROSSWORD No. TCC#0264

The **TOI Crossword contest** is on a short break, but the crossword itself will continue to be featured in The Sunday Times of India, so that you can continue to relish the challenge every week. **Stay tuned!**



The Times of India CROSSWORD EVERY SUNDAY

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1 Losing form due to a rise in temperature (7)
5 Walked back around a man sleeping (7)
9 Refuse to go through all the cases? (7)
10 Type of fiction unfamiliar to the French (7)
11 Thrash about the ring showing little craft (5)
12 Alarming to find acid in drink (9)
13 Though a pound short, victualler may be well paid (9)
15 Imprisons many for a long time (5)
16 Pert - like a robin? (5)
18 The first man to fly an aircraft (4,5)
21 Soccer war erupts and it's a frightening thing (9)
24 King-size is unusually large (5)
25 Dismissed with anger - it's a scandal (7)
26 Get hint about contract (7)
27 Tell you it's wrong to shout in pain (4,3)
28 Sign of fever perhaps and rash (7)

Down

1 Claimed to be a test of fitness (7)
2 It's short and possibly conical (7)
3 I can time railway route (9)
4 Think of America (5)
5 Guard seen changing overalls (9)
6 Concentrate on cutting the hedge (5)
7 Joining forces and rallying without a leader (7)
8 A crying necessity in mob control? (4,3)
14 Make a stop on the way? (9)
15 Yet it's wrong to imitate anything like this (9)
16 Imprisonment for possession (7)
17 La Costa resort by the sea (7)
19 He inherits blended tea with glee (7)
20 Like vultures only found in the borders of Thailand (7)
22 Muse to appear after a very long time (5)
23 Potboiler notorious for bad spelling (5)

QUICK CLUES

Across

1 Yielded good results (4,3) 5 Seeking to remain detached (7) 9 A French folk dance (7) 10 Summary of facts (5-2) 11 Severe (5) 12 Shakespeare's shrew (9) 13 To gamble (9) 15 Ill-defined in meaning (5) 16 Creator of Robinson Crusoe (5) 18 Communicate intelligibly (3,6) 21 So as to create an impression (3,6) 24 Full of life (5) 25 Heighten (7) 26 Sweet smell (7) 27 Rushing stream (7) 28 Regional form of language (7)

Down

1 Mythical winged horse (7) 2 Bill (7) 3 Not at correct pitch (3,2,4) 4 A vagary of nature (5) 5 Falling back (2,7) 6 US composer of marches (5) 7 Temporary accommodation (7) 8 Put back (7) 14 Now (2,7) 15 The other way round (4,5) 16 Turn aside (7) 17 Promote (7) 19 Thrust oneself forward (7) 20 Able to pay debts (7) 22 Practice swordplay (5) 23 Unenthusiastic (5)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

CRYPTIC

S	C	R	A	P	S	■	H	I	G	H	B	A	L	L
P	■	A	■	U	■	■	■	V	■	A	■	G	■	A
A	S	T	E	R	N	■	M	A	I	N	T	A	I	N
R	■	I	■	E	■	A	■	N	■	D	■	I	■	T
T	R	O	L	L	O	P	E	■	U	S	A	N	C	E
A	■	N	■	Y	■	R	■	F	■	O	■	■	■	R
N	O	A	H	■	W	I	L	L	O	F	I	R	O	N
■	■	■	L	■	B	■	C	■	A	■	F	■	E	■	■
S	P	E	L	L	B	O	U	N	D	■	O	P	A	L
U	■	■	■	O	■	T	■	G	■	V	■	A	■	O
C	R	U	N	C	H	■	D	E	M	O	N	I	A	C
C	■	V	■	K	■	M	■	D	■	L	■	R	■	A
E	D	U	C	A	T	E	D	■	S	U	B	M	I	T
E	■	L	■	D	■	R	■	■	■	M	■	A	■	E
D	I	A	M	E	T	E	R	■	P	E	N	N	E	D

QUICK

M	O	D	E	S	T	■	S	T	E	P	O	N	I	T
E	■	O	■	H	■	■	■	O	■	E	■	A	■	H
A	E	G	E	A	N	■	D	O	W	N	S	I	D	E
N	■	E	■	B	■	M	■	K	■	T	■	V	■	A
D	E	A	D	B	E	A	T	■	T	A	L	E	N	T
E	■	T	■	Y	■	D	■	O	■	G	■	■	■	R
R	U	D	E	■	L	O	W	P	R	O	F	I	L	E
■	■	■	O	■	C	■	N	■	H	■	N	■	N	■	■
H	I	G	H	H	A	N	D	E	D	■	■	S	T	E	M
O	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	L	■	A	■	E	■	I
S	E	S	A	M	E	■	M	I	N	S	T	R	E	L
T	■	O	■	P	■	S	■	A	■	T	■	A	■	I
A	L	L	R	I	G	H	T	■	Z	E	A	L	O	T
G	■	V	■	O	■	O	■	■	■	R	■	I	■	I
E	T	E	R	N	I	T	Y	■	A	N	K	A	R	A

SNAP SHOTS

Anthony triumphs

US newcomer Jordan Anthony announced himself on the global stage by scorching to gold in the men's 60m at the world indoor championships in Torun, Poland. The 21-year-old American clocked a season's best of 6.41 seconds.

Piyush, Sahil qualify: Bihar's Piyush Raj (47.11s) and Uttarakhand's Sahil Malik (47.28s) achieved the qualification standard for the World Athletics U-20 Championships after finishing first and second in the U-20 men's 400m at the Indian Open meet held in Thiruvananthapuram, on Saturday, reports **Rayson Tennyson**. Tamil Nadu's Rajesh Ramesh produced the performance of the meet as he won men's title in 45.26 seconds, bettering his personal best of 45.54 set in 2024.

Tanvi's campaign ends: India's teen shuttler Tanvi Sharma went down in straight games against former world champion Nozomi Okuhara in the women's singles semi-finals of the Orleans Masters Super 300 tournament in Orleans on Saturday. The 17-year-old Indian lost 9-21, 16-21 in 35 minutes.

Aditi moves to tied 3rd: Aditi Ashok carded a second round of 6-under 66 to move into tied third alongside world No. 1 Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand at the Fortinet Founders Cup in California. Both Aditi and Thitikul carded rounds of 6-under 66. Hyo Joo Kim extended her lead as she moved four shots clear of Gaby Lopez of Mexico.

Draper, Ruud suffer loss: Britain's Jack Draper suffered a surprise defeat to American Reilly Opelka 7-6 (3), 7-6 (0) in the second round of the Miami Open on Friday. Earlier, fellow American Quinn saved seven set points on his way to a 6-4, 7-6(7) victory over Ruud.

Tumakuru to host ITF W35 meet in May: Tumakuru is set to host its first ever ITF Women's World Tennis Tour W35 tournament from May 4-10. The tournament will be held at the Tumkur District Tennis Stadium.

Gritty Yashaswini lifts maiden National title

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Eighth seed **Yashaswini Ghorpade** won her maiden title at the National Table Tennis Championships in Indore on Saturday. The Karnataka paddler, who represented Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), scored an 11-6, 12-14, 11-5, 9-11, 13-11, 6-11, 11-8 victory over her teammate, third seed Syndrela Das, in the women's singles final.

"Winning the national title is always prestigious. I am

TABLE TENNIS

pleased with how things went in the final though it was a close match. My forehand really worked to beat Syndrela," the Bengaluru girl, who collected the winner's cheque of Rs 3.52 lakh, said.

The 21-year-old Yashaswini got on the board quickly, taking a 1-0 lead, but Syndrela put up a fine show in the second to draw level. There was nothing to choose between the two players as Yashaswini's controlled aggression helped her win the third, while Syndrela fought back to make it 2-2. The fifth game was no different with both players coming up with a gritty show, but Yashaswini, who registered a come-from-behind win over Suhana Saini in the semifinal, took a 3-2 lead with a 13-11 win in the fifth game.

But Syndrela was in no mood to give up as the 16-year-old forced the title clash into the decider. In the end, Yashaswini held her nerve to emerge victorious.

In the men's section, top seed Manav Thakkar of PSPB also bagged his maiden title with an 11-2, 11-4, 6-11, 11-9, 11-3 win against Jeet Chandra of Railway Sports Promotion Board. **Results (final): Women:** Yashaswini Ghorapde (PSPB) bt Syndrela Das (PSPB) 11-6, 12-14, 11-5, 9-11, 13-11, 6-11, 11-8. **Men:** Manav Thakkar (PSPB) bt Jeet Chandra (RSPB) 11-2, 11-4, 6-11, 11-9, 11-3.

Ultimo fancied for main event

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Ultimo, from the stables of Pradeep Chouhan, to be ridden by Trevor Patel and Market King (Yash Narredu up) from Imtiaz Sait's yard are likely to dominate the Seth Ramnath Daga Trophy, the feature event of the races here on Sunday. Th first race starts at 5 pm.

1. Dopahar Trophy 1000M: Azure 1, Storm Cloud 2.

2. Homi Mehta Trophy 2000M: Endurance 1, Exuma 2.

3. MH Ahmedbhoy Trophy 1600M: Tajiri 1, Giant Gold 2.

4. Seth Ramanath Daga Trophy 1400M: Ultimo 1, Market King 2.

5. Truefitt & Hill Royal Heritage Cup 1400M: Ministry Of Time 1, Speak The Breed 2. **6. Racing Journalists Trophy 1200M:** Heaven's Rhythm 1, Machiavellian 2.

Day's best: Ministry Of Time.

Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. **Treble:** 3, 4 & 5.

SCARAMOUCHE WINS

Scaramouche from the stables of Behram Cama, ridden by Sandesh, won the Free Press Journal Trophy, the feature event of the races in Mumbai on Saturday.

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TIMES SPORT
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Hardik's quest: Rise with stars and SKY

To End Their Six-Year Trophy Drought, Star-Studded Mumbai Indians Need To Play As One Unit Under Skipper Pandya

IPL 2026 — 6 DAYS TO GO

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Despite persisting with a strong core for years, Mumbai Indians have failed to win the IPL title since 2020. To end this drought in IPL 2026, they will need their superstar players to put the team above individual ambitions and respond positively to Hardik Pandya's leadership style.

MI's leadership group is vastly experienced, with Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah, all capable of turning matches in pressure situations. With most of their top players in form, the five-time champions would want their title drought to end this season.

With a lethal batting line-up, multiple all-rounders, a world-class pace spearhead in Bumrah and a crafty T20 spinner in Mitchell Santner, MI possess a combination most teams would envy. Being one of the most successful franchises in IPL history, they know the winning formula — they simply need to rediscover it.

Less than a month ago, Pandya delivered another strong all-round performance in India's triumph at the 2026 T20 World Cup, earning praise for his bowling contributions, something R Ashwin recently highlighted as being underappreciated. As a senior player, Hardik played a crucial role in helping India lift the trophy under Suryakumar Yadav's captaincy.

When MI begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Wankhede Stadium on March 29, Pandya will expect a similar level of commitment from his India teammates — Suryakumar, Rohit, Bumrah and Tilak Varma.

Add overseas firepower in Will Jacks, Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickelton and New Zealand's white-ball captain Santner, and MI appear, on paper, to be one of the strongest franchise sides in world cricket.

Yet, this star-studded outfit — the IPL's version of the Galacticos — has struggled to gel into a champion team since Pandya returned as captain in 2024. His first season as MI captain was disastrous, with the team managing only four wins in 14 matches.

The situation worsened with the crowd booing him as he had replaced sentimental favourite Rohit as captain and there were even reports of dressing-room unrest. However, the management kept faith in Pandya and retained him for IPL 2025. The results improved as MI reached the playoffs, before Shreyas Iyer's sensational knock knocked them out in Qualifier 2 against Punjab Kings.

IPL 2026 could be a defining test for Pandya's leadership. Suryakumar Yadav's stature has risen after leading India to the T20 World Cup title and he too would be nursing captaincy ambitions in the IPL. Rohit too remains one of the most respected leaders in world cricket. If MI struggle early, calls for a leadership rethink may grow louder. The best approach for Pandya and head coach Mahela Jayawardene would be a collaborative leadership model that actively involves senior players in decision-making. Such a consultative approach would keep the dressing room united and focused on the trophy rather than individual egos.

This season could also be crucial for Rohit. Now visibly leaner and fitter, the 38-year-old looks motivated for a strong campaign. Used as an Impact Sub at times last season, Rohit could play a larger on-field role this year, allowing him to contribute more to tactical decisions. The Mumbaikar remains the emotional heartbeat of MI, though a prolonged dip in form could raise uncomfortable questions.

MI's batting has tremendous depth. Rohit is likely to open with either Quinton de Kock or Ryan Rickelton, followed by a strong middle order featuring Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak and Hardik, along with power-hitters Sherfane Rutherford and Jacks. Pandya's own batting position will be key — ideally, he should bat no lower than No 6 to maximise his impact in the death overs.

Much will also depend on Jasprit Bumrah, whose match-winning spells powered India's T20 World Cup campaign. Pandya would be wise to use him as a strike bowler throughout the innings, much like Suryakumar did for India, rather than saving him only for the death overs. Beyond Bumrah and Santner, MI's bowling could be vulnerable on the flat Wankhede pitch, especially against big-hitting line-ups.

Ultimately, Pandya's biggest challenge is to ensure MI function as a happy, united team rather than a group of superstars with bruised egos. Keeping emotions in check and fostering harmony in the dressing room will be crucial. If MI get that right, Hardik could find himself smiling on the podium after the IPL final on May 31.

IANS

As Mumbai Indians captain, Hardik Pandya's task is to collaborate constructively with India's World-Cup winning skipper Suryakumar Yadav (R) and other senior pros in the team

PANDYA AS ALLROUNDER AND MI CAPTAIN

Batting & Fielding

	M	Runs	HS	Ave	50	SR	6s	Ct
	29	440	48*	20.95	0	152.77	23	7
In wins	13	171	48*	28.50	0	166.01	10	3
in losses	16	269	46	17.93	0	145.40	13	4

Bowling

	M	Wkts	Ave	Best	4WI	SR	ER
	29	25	29.16	5/36	1	17.0	10.26
In wins	13	8	30.37	3/31	0	20.2	9.00
In losses	16	17	28.58	5/36	1	15.5	11.04

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

THE MI SWOT

Be it a power-packed batting unit, skilful allrounders, or a bowling line-up with depth and potency, Mumbai Indians have most bases covered to go deep in IPL 2026...

BUMRAH

BOULT

Strength: Mumbai Indians' biggest strength is their batting core of India's 2026 T20 World Cup winners—Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya and Tilak Varma—who bring stability and firepower. Overseas stars like Will Jacks, Sherfane Rutherford and Mitchell Santner add depth, while Jasprit Bumrah remains the side's biggest USP, capable of changing games at any stage. A strong pool of all-rounders gives MI flexibility and balance across conditions.

Weakness: The lack of a reliable Indian opener alongside Rohit Sharma and an experienced Indian wicketkeeper could force MI to play both Ryan Rickelton and Quinton de Kock, using up overseas slots. With Piyush Chawla retired, Santner becomes the frontline spinner, further limiting combinations and tactical flexibility.

Opportunity: Trent Boult and Deepak Chahar offer a potent new-ball threat, while all-rounders like Hardik, Santner, Jacks and Shardul Thakur provide balance. Hardik and Naman Dhir add finishing power, giving MI the ability to dominate key phases of the game. totals. If their bowling unit clicks, and does so collectively, MI could dominate the powerplay and death overs.

Threat: Ageing stars like Rohit, de Kock, Boult and Santner raise concerns over fielding and consistency. Heavy dependence on senior players and too many options could create selection confusion resulting in issues with role-clarity.

—Gaurav Gupta

Ali Bacher's grandson looks to emulate Ashwin

Jarren Took Up Off-Break As An Afterthought But Is Now A Net Bowler For CSK

Neha.Surana @timesofindia.com

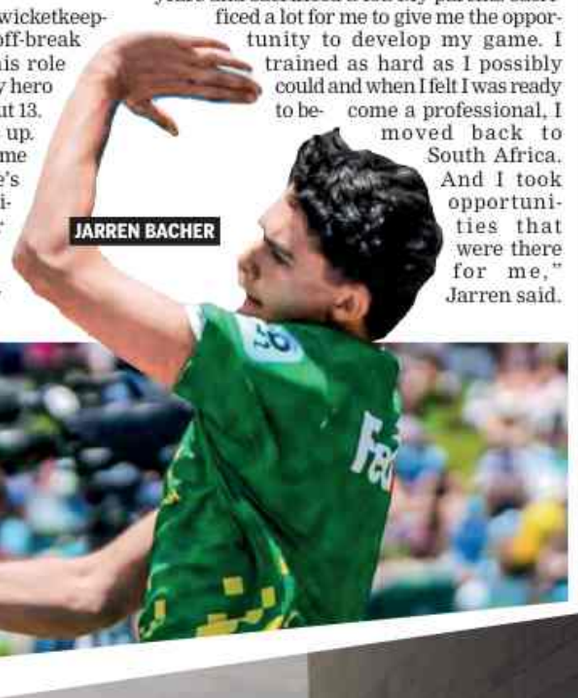
Chennai: Aron 'Ali' Bacher is a South African cricketing legend, a name that is firmly etched in the country's history. As a player, captain and long-serving administrator, he made an impact both on and off the field. He led South Africa to a 4-0 Test series whitewash over Australia in 1969-70, during the apartheid era, and later played a key role in helping more non-white cricketers get opportunities at the highest level.

While his nephew Adam Bacher played Test cricket for South Africa in the late 1990s, now it's Ali's grandson Jarren's turn to try and make a mark. The 22-year-old off-spinner is contracted with the Johannesburg Super Kings in the SA20 league and is currently at the Chennai Super Kings camp here as a net bowler.

Jarren initially began as a wicketkeeper-batter before shifting to off-break bowling. When asked who his role model, pat came the reply: "My hero is Ravi Ashwin since I was about 13. He's a fighter. He never gives up. Some people say he plays the game quite hard, but I like that. He's got this real never-give-up attitude, and I feel like batters fear him like they would a fast bowler. I enjoy that aspect of his game a lot. Unfortunately have not met him yet, but I hope that the opportunity comes," Jarren, who hopes to play for CSK one day, told TOI on the sidelines of the 12th Pavit Singh Nayar Memorial T20 tournament at Guru Nanak College Ground on Saturday.

Going back in time about his initial days as a cricketer, Jarren said: "I first took an interest in cricket because of my family. My dad (David) was a cricket coach and my uncle (Aaron Nickel) and grandfather (Ali) both played cricket professionally. And when I was about three, my dad started teaching me how to bat for the first time. My family never put too much pressure on me. They wanted me to figure out my love for the game by myself. And the love for the game has always been there."

Jarren acknowledged that he wasn't the "best cricketer for a very long time". "I never played at high level while I was growing up at school. It was when I turned 17 that I decided I really want to make a career out of this. So then I decided to leave South Africa by myself and moved to England for four years and sacrificed a lot. My parents sacrificed a lot for me to give me the opportunity to develop my game. I trained as hard as I possibly could and when I felt I was ready to become a professional, I moved back to South Africa. And I took opportunities that were there for me," Jarren said.


JARREN BACHER

More injury woes for KKR as Akash Deep too ruled out

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Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders' problems keep getting bigger as their pacer Akash Deep on Saturday was ruled out for at least eight weeks due to a lower-back stress injury. The injury not only ruled the Bengal pacer out of this IPL but his participation in the one-off Test against Afghanistan in early June also looks doubtful now.

AKASH DEEP

"Akash Deep has a stress reaction on his lower back. There has been recurrence and it might take 8-12 weeks to heal. He is not going to play the IPL and is very unlikely to be selected against Afghanistan," BCCI source was quoted as saying.

The cricketer from Bihar has played 14 matches claiming 10 wickets in four seasons since his IPL debut in 2022.

The 29-year-old Bengal pacer, picked for Rs 1 crore at last year's mini-auction in Abu Dhabi, had not reported for the Knights' pre-season camp which got underway at the Eden Gardens on March 18. The pacer suffered the injury during the Ranji Trophy semifinal between Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir in Kalyani. He could bowl only 13 overs in the first innings and under seven in the second as Bengal lost the match.

He has been undergoing rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru since then. Although he was recovering well, it was learnt that he once again felt some uneasiness which ruled him out of action.Akash Deep became the latest addition to the three-time champions' growing injury list. With India pacer Harshit Rana all but out and the team management still hoping to get Sri Lankan Matheesha Pathirana later on in this IPL.

KKR, who have an abundance of riches in the batting department, will have to rely on their remaining domestic bowling options that include Vaibhav Arora, Kartik Tyagi and a fit-again Umran Malik.

Seamers Akash Madhwal, Navdeep Saini, Simarjeet Singh, KM Asif and Sandeep Warrier have been called for preparatory camp as the side looks for a replacement.

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'Biggest infiltrator' is PM: Didi at Eid meet

Raises Voter Roll Deletion Issue, Calls For Unity

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TOI

Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee during Eid celebration

Kolkata: Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee chose Kolkata's largest Eid congregation on Red Road to call PM Narendra Modi the "biggest infiltrator... who shakes hands in Saudi Arabia" but harps on "the Hindu-Muslim narrative (when he is) in India".

"We will not give up our rights to Modiji. He goes to Saudi Arabia and shakes hands there. I respect all countries but I am proud of my own. You seem to forget everything when you shake hands abroad but, when you return to India, the Hindu-Muslim narrative begins again. You then call for deleting names, labelling people infiltrators. I would say you are the bigger infiltrator," she said Saturday during a six-minute address.

Banerjee linked her remarks to an ongoing dispute over voter roll deletions under the SIR process, saying she had moved both Calcutta high court and Supreme Court. "I still hope people's rights will be protected. I will stand by people of Bengal — across religion, caste and creed — like family," she said.

Pitching Bengal as a bastion of social harmony, she added: "Bengal believes in unity. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians — everyone lives together here. We will not allow anyone to break this social fabric."

BATTLEGROUND WEST BENGAL

Banerjee also accused BJP of exerting control over state administration, alleging an "undeclared President's rule" before April 23 and 29 assembly polls in the state. "You have captured our administration... they have removed everyone and plan to place BJP functionaries in these positions. This is a party of thieves, robbers, goons, and gaddars (traitors)," she said, adding: "Jo darte hain, woh marte hain. Jo ladte hain, woh kamyab hote hain (Those who fear, die. Those who fight, succeed)."

Without naming him, she referred to Bharatpur MLA Humayun Kabir's "betrayal", alleging attempts to split votes with BJP backing. Quoting a line popularised in the film Coolie, she said outcomes ultimately rest with the Almighty.

Closing her address, Banerjee described the rain as a "blessing from god" and prayed for Bengal's prosperity while warning that those seeking to harm the state would face consequences.

TN NDA seat pact nears close, deal likely in two days

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AMMK chief Dhinakaran, who met HM Amit Shah, said Delhi talks was to discuss strategy

Chennai: AIADMK-led NDA in Tamil Nadu is likely to wrap up seat-sharing talks in a day or two with BJP's state in-charge Piyush Goyal to arrive in Chennai Sunday or Monday to finalise the deal.

Sources said AIADMK was likely contest around 170 seats; BJP may contest 25 to 28 seats; AMMK around 10 seats, and PMK 18. Other allies may get between one and three seats.

In the meantime, AMMK chief TTV Dhinakaran told journalists in Delhi that his meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah centred on evolving an "election strategy" to work in coordination and replicate NDA's Bihar victory in Tamil Nadu.

BATTLEGROUND TAMIL NADU

Dhinakaran likened AIADMK-led NDA to a "Panja Pandavar ani" taking on DMK's "Duryodhanan kootani" from the Hindu epic Mahabharatam, and stressed that seat-sharing or choice of constituencies did not figure in the talks. Piyush Goyal was present during the discussion. Dhinakaran's visit to the national capital follows AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami's late-night meeting with Shah Thursday. PMK leader and MP Anbumani Ramadoss is in Delhi too. "We have come to Delhi to discuss strategy with Shah to defeat DMK and form an AIADMK-NDA govt in the state. He has given some instructions and advice," Dhinakaran said.

Seat-sharing talks among alliance partners in NDA would be held in Chennai in the coming days and would be completed within two to three days, Dhinakaran said.

BJP picks counter outsider jibe: Was Rahul 'imported' in Wayanad?

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Guwahati: Charges of "non-indigenous" and "imported" candidates intensified the contest in two of Guwahati's four seats before assembly polls on April 9, putting BJP nominees on defensive Saturday and giving opposition fresh attack lines.

BATTLEGROUND ASSAM

The debate raged on a day BJP announced two more candidates for the Assam polls — Krishna Saha from Dalgaon and Jiban Gogoi from Sissibargaon, taking its tally to 90 nominees for the 126-member assembly. Remaining 36 seats have been shared with allies AGP (26) and Bodoland People's Front (11).

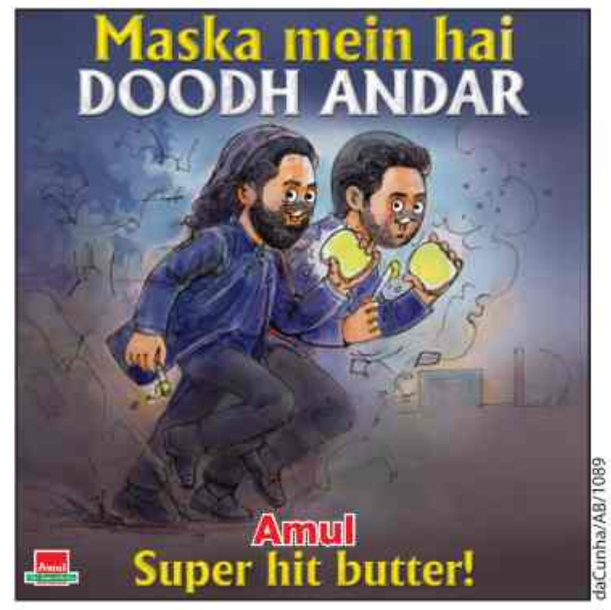
BJP had earlier named 88 candidates and was supposed to name one more. But seat-sharing hit friction point in Chamaria, where both BJP and AGP fielded candidates, raising possibility of a contest within the alliance.

In Guwahati East, BJP nominee Diplu Ranjan Sarma has been labelled a "chalani" — or imported candidate — by rivals, citing his origins in Kaliabor in Nagaon district. Sarma pushed back, drawing parallels with Congress functionaries contesting outside home turfs.

"Did they call Rahul Gandhi an imported candidate when he contested from Wayanad? Did Congress call former CM Tarun Gogoi imported when he contested from Margherita?" Sarma asked, stressing he has lived in Guwahati for 25 years and is a permanent resident of New Guwahati constituency.

In Guwahati Central, BJP candidate Vijay Gupta faced allegations of being an outsider, with opposition parties accusing BJP of para-dropping candidates and denying space to aspirants from indigenous communities. BJP functionaries rejected the claim, asserting Gupta's deep roots in Assam.

"I have no challenge before me. I am an Assamese. My father came here in 1925. Assam is my motherland and place of birth," said Gupta, Gupta, associated with BJP since 1990. The row gained traction after Ramendra Narayan Kalita of ally AGP was denied ticket for Guwahati Central.



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Candidates rush to submit nominations before deadline

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Thiruvananthapuram: With only one working day left to submit nomination papers for the assembly elections, a large number of candidates, including senior leaders and ministers, filed their papers across the state on Saturday.

Candidates from various political fronts arrived in groups, often accompanied by supporters in processions, to submit their nominations in different districts. Many aspirants rushed to complete the formalities on the same day, as Monday is last day to submit nominations.

BATTLEGROUND KERALA

Among those who filed nominations were LDF candidates, including ministers P A Mohamed Riyas in Beypore, Roshi Augustine in Idukki, Kadannappally Ramachandran in Kannur and K K Shailaja in Peravur.

UDF candidate Ramesh Chennithala submitted his nomination at the Haripad taluk office after arriving in a procession with party workers. Other UDF candidates, including KPCC president Sunny Joseph, P K Kunhalikutty and K Muraleedharan, also filed their papers.

From the NDA, K Surendran (Manjeshwaram) and Rajeev Chandrasekhar (Nemom) submitted their nominations. G Sudhakaran, contesting with UDF support in Ambalappuzha, also filed his papers.

In Kozhikode, LDF candidate P A Mohamed Riyas filed three sets of nomination papers before the joint director of the local self govt department.

The Election Commission informed that as may as 537 nominations were received till 8pm on Saturday.

PTI

NDA candidate from Kozhikode constituency Navya Haridas with Rajasthan deputy chief minister Prem Chand Bairwa in Kozhikode on Saturday

Four independent candidates for LDF

T'puram: Left Democratic Front (LDF) has announced four independent candidates for assembly elections, including two in Malappuram district.

According to an official release, actor Sudheera Karamana will contest as an LDF-backed independent in Thiruvananthapuram Central. C P Musthafa and Shanavas Padur will seek mandate from Vallikkunnu and Kasaragod, respectively with the support of Indian National League (INL).

P Mohammed Sameer has been fielded in Tanur.

Karamana was fielded as Democratic Kerala Congress, which was responsible for identifying a suitable candidate, was unable to find one.

This led to uncertainty and concerns within the alliance. Amid the continuing ambiguity, LDF reached a consensus on fielding Karamana, potentially bringing clarity to the constituency's candidature. Sameer is an industrialist and philanthropist. TNN

BJD suspends 6 MLAs for cross-voting in RS elections

Ashok.Pradhan
@timesofindia.com

Bhubaneswar: BJD on Saturday suspended six MLAs for cross-voting in the March 16 Rajya Sabha polls. While eight MLAs defied the party whip, the regional party led by ex-CM Naveen Patnaik had already suspended two other MLAs in Jan for anti-party activities.

BJD chief whip Pramila Mallik said the party would recommend disqualification of the six to assembly Speaker Surama Padhy.

Eleven MLAs, eight from BJD and three from Congress, cross-voted during the RS election, ensuring the defeat of Datteswar Hota, who was backed by both parties. Former Union minister Dilip Ray won as an independent, backed by BJP and cross-votes from the 11 MLAs. Congress had earlier suspended its three MLAs and recommended their disqualification.

According to Mallik, BJD decided to suspend the six MLAs after going through their replies to a March 17 showcause. "The MLAs were suspended for involvement in anti-party activities, including cross-voting in the recent election to Rajya Sabha, violating the core principle of the BJD constitution, which mandates absolute loyalty to the party's collective decisions," a BJD statement said.

The suspended MLAs are Chakramani Kanhar), Naba Kishore Mallick, Souvic Biswal, Subasini Jena), Ramakanta Bhoi and Devi Ranjan Tripathy).

Arvind Mohapatra and Sanatan Mahakud were suspended in Jan.

Trying out digital detox? Take it slow, give brain time to realign

To help readers cope with their anxieties in these stressful times, TOI's ***Talk it Out*** *series brings expert counsellors to answer your mental health queries. This week's advice is from counselling psychologist* ***Gunjan Arya***

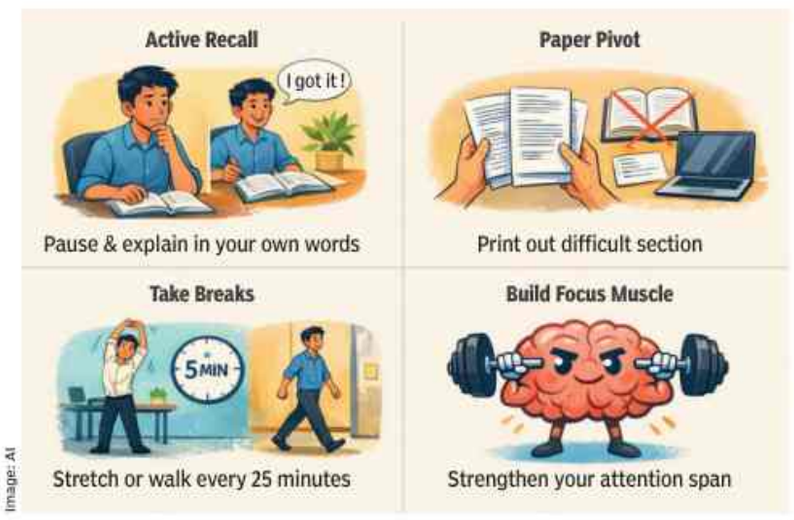

Image: AI

I'm a working professional at a mid-tier company in Delhi. About a month ago, I started a digital detox (complete with app blockers) to get my screen time under control. While that's been a great step, I've hit a wall when it comes to work-related reading. I'm new in the field and reading up about general insurance. But lately, even getting through five pages feels like a mountain. I often get stuck on a single page, re-reading it without actually absorbing anything. Even with short breaks, staring at my laptop screen feels exhausting and by afternoon, I'm feeling grumpy and restless. I need to get through this material but can't seem to break the pattern. How to stop 'looping' while reading at my desk?

— Anonymous

Starting a digital detox is a commendable step, but what you're experiencing now is simply your brain adjusting. After years of quick scrolling and constant notifications, switching to dense material feels slow and tiring. That's why you find yourself 'looping' over the same page. To break this cycle, try Active Recall: pause after every couple of paragraphs and explain the idea in your own words. If you can't, don't move ahead yet — this keeps your mind engaged. Another trick is the Paper Pivot: print out tougher sections so your eyes and brain get relief from the screen. Short breaks also help — five minutes of stretching or walking every 25 minutes can reset your focus. Think of attention like a muscle: it strengthens with practice. With patience and consistent effort, you'll absorb material more smoothly and feel less restless at the desk.

I'm a medical student from Raipur. I took two drop years but couldn't get through to a govt medical college. Now, I am studying at a private one but have already wasted five months of my session either hanging out with friends or visiting random places, or scrolling on the phone all day. Everyone else seems to balance fun and academics. But I can't retain half the things taught. I don't feel like studying. I have this lingering feeling that I'm losing my capacity to remember things. And I haven't even achieved something or gone through any serious struggle yet. What do I do?

— Anonymous

It may feel like your memory is slipping, but what's really happening is that your brain has become used to the instant rewards of scrolling. Compared to that, studying feels slow and unrewarding. Add the pressure of drop years, and it's natural to want to escape into your phone. First, stop comparing yourself to others — you're only seeing their 'highlight reel', not their struggles. To rebuild focus, try a Low-Dopamine Morning: keep your phone away for the first two hours after waking. Use that fresh energy for your toughest subject. When the urge to scroll hits, remind yourself it's just stress talking, then commit to 15 minutes of study. Small wins matter — they build confidence and remind you that your ability to learn is still intact. Over time, these habits will help you balance fun and academics without feeling like you're falling behind.

I just finished my class 10 boards and have no idea what to do all day. I just start a new OTT series or show and complete it in a day or two. I thought I'll do a lot of fun activities, learn new skills this summer, but it's become boring already. How can I be more productive?

— Anonymous

Finishing your class 10 boards is a huge milestone. It's natural to feel a little lost afterward. For months, your days were structured around exams, deadlines, and achievement. Now, with sudden freedom, your brain is craving that same sense of purpose. That's why binge-watching OTTs feels easy but quickly becomes boring: it gives you instant entertainment but no lasting satisfaction. To break the 'summer slump', start small. Use the 10-Minute Rule: pick a skill you've been curious about — whether its coding, sketching, or baking — and commit to just ten minutes a day. Once you begin, the hardest part (starting) is already done. You can also try the One-for-One Trade: for every hour of OTT, give yourself 30 minutes of active learning or creative work. Apps like Duolingo or Mimo can make skill-building feel fun and gamified. Remember, motivation doesn't come first — action does. By taking small steps, you'll rediscover your curiosity and feel productive again. This summer can be more than just another series binge; it can be the start of something new.

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If digital addiction is affecting you or someone close to you, we're here to listen. Email your question, name, and location to **talkitout@timesofindia.com.** If you'd like to keep your identity confidential, please state that in your message

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Robin Uthappa believes IPL 2026 is likely to be Dhoni's last year in CSK. 'I see him playing more of a mentor-cum-player role this season,' he says

World Oral Health Day
20 March

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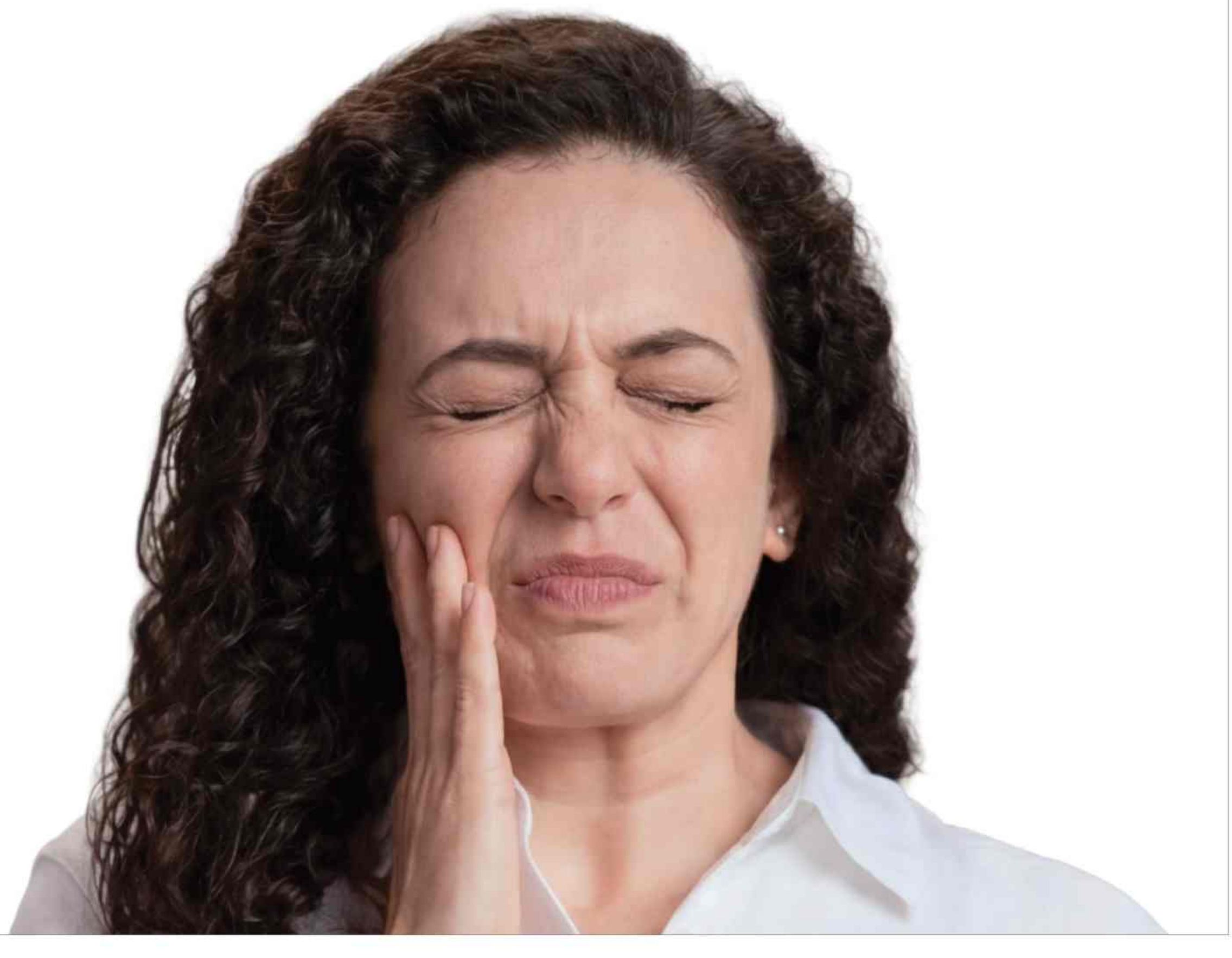
FLIP TO KNOW YOUR DENTAL AGE



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